THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY

FRANCIS J. McCONNELL

BY FRANCIS J. McCONNELL

THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY

BORDEN PARKER BOWNE

THE CHRISTLIKE GOD

THE JUST WEIGHT, AND OTHER CHAPEL ADDRESSES

IS GOD LIMITED?

LIVING TOGETHER

CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

THE PREACHER AND THE PEOPLE

PUBLIC OPINION AND THEOLOGY

UNDERSTANDING THE SCRIPTURES

THE ESSENTIALS OF METHODISM

THE INCREASE OF FAITH

CHRISTMAS SERMONS

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THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY

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TO

LUTHER ALLAN WEIGLE

THE LYMAN BEECHER FUND in the Yale Divinity School was established May 2, 1872, by a gift of ten thousand dollars from Henry W. Sage, Esq., then of Brooklyn, New York, in memory of Lyman Beecher, of the class of 1797, Yale College, who died January 10, 1863. In accordance with the wishes of the donor, this gift was devoted by the Yale Corporation to the establishment of a Foundation "to be designated as 'The Lyman Beecher Lectureship on Preaching,' to be filled from time to time, upon the appointment of the Corporation, by a minister of the Gospel, of any evangelical denomination, who has been markedly successful in the special work of the Christian ministry." With the authorization of the donor, subsequent votes of the Corporation have enlarged the scope of the Lectureship to embrace any topic appropriate to the work of the Christian ministry, and to permit the appointment of a layman instead of a minister to deliver the lectures upon the Lyman Beecher Foundation should it at any time be deemed desirable to do so.

The present course of lectures, being the fifty-sixth upon the Lyman Beecher Foundation, was delivered in Battell Chapel, Yale University, April, 28–May 2, 1930.

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I

THE AIM OF THE PROPHETS

THERE is a rather common misunderstanding to the effect that the Hebrew prophets, especially beginning with the time of Amos, were peculiar for their interest in religion as such, and that they gave their effort to the development of primarily religious aims. We hear them often spoken of as dowered with religious genius.

Religious interest is almost universal. Looking at our own time, there may be less of it in the countries which we call Christian than in the non-Christian lands, for in those non-Christian lands religion touches practically every detail of the daily existence. Suppose we look at two non-Christian nations—China and India. The powerful religion in China is ancestor-worship. China's daily activities are determined almost as much by the belief in personal immortality as by the recognition that the people of China themselves are now on earth. The ancestors still live, in Chinese belief, and live in peculiarly close dependence upon their surviving descendants who are on earth. A man's search for a daily wage is usually the most urgent feature of his existence, and in China the labor for the wage

has to be determined in part by the needs of the ancestors. In India religion likewise rules everything, and rules more despotically than in China. It dictates what the Indian shall do from his rising in the morning till his lying down at night, and shapes his thinking and his dreams through the night. It divides men into social groups and holds the groups together within themselves with a tightness, and apart from one another with an exclusiveness, which have never yet been possible to any other social organization on earth. To some of the symbols of that religion every Indian leader, no matter how exalted or enlightened, must pay honor. The foremost popular hero in India to-day makes it clear to the youth of his country that he yields to none in his reverence for the sacred cow. The utterance is no doubt entirely sincere, but the avowal is necessary if this leader is to retain his hold upon the followers by the hundreds of millions.

As it is now, so has it ever been. The religions in every land were flourishing in full power long before the Hebrew prophets appeared. I mention Chinese and Indian systems simply because they let us see to-day conditions of religious belief similar to those of the days of the prophets. The ancient world was religious. Quite likely all the more important features of twentieth-century non-Christian systems were daily to be observed in the rites and practices of

the nations around Israel, and some of them in Israel itself. No,—the people among whom the prophets lived were not irreligious. They took their religion at all times seriously, and at some times obeyed it desperately, as in the sacrificial killing of the first-born. As Professor Powis-Smith has remarked, fathers and mothers who are sacrificing their first-born to their gods are at least taking their religion seriously. No matter how much callousness there may be among people who are daily accustomed to the spectacles of awful hardship, the sacrifice of the first-born must call for complete devotion to religion.

The prophets, then, could not have attained distinction just because they were religious. Religion was too common an individual and social phenomenon of their time. Yet religion was the chief sphere of their activity. A moment ago I said that there is probably more religion—quantitatively speaking—in non-Christian lands than in Christian of the same population. Can we not get a starting-point at our study of the prophets by noting the cause, or one of the causes, of this difference? Whatever may be said of practice, in ideal at least Christianity aims at the highest conceivable moral life. Salvation for the individual and society, on the terms which we all admit to be Christian, calls for voluntary surrender to the loftiest conceivable moral ideals. In genuine Christianity there is unrelenting

effort to unite religion and morality. The fact that so many of the non-Christian systems are more widely observed in the non-Christian lands than is Christianity in Christendom is probably in chief part due to the strenuousness of the moral demands of Christianity. The requirements of non-Christian religions are met by performing the external rites which make adjustment to the unseen forces. What those unseen powers are supposed to demand is the fulfillment of certain outer requirements without much regard to the inner temper in which they are met. The invisible spirits are imagined as having very human likes and dislikes, with moral limitations considerably like those of men. The problem of these non-Christian religions is to make adjustment to an unseen environment, and, since the unseen impinges upon the seen all the time, ample place in daily activities must be given to cultivating right relations to the unseen. As men have become more intelligent—or perhaps more sophisticated—they have learned to look upon some human activities as morally indifferent, and many have lacked the will to heed the deeper moral requirements of religion. Divorcing themselves from the ethically distinctive in Christianity, they have finally cut themselves off also from Christianity as religion, and appear, especially to non-Christian peoples, as thoroughly irreligious.

From this observation as to what is distinctive of Christianity to-day and what was distinctive of the Judaism from which Christianity sprang, it is possible, I think, to see what the prophets were aiming at. They were striving for the defense of the religion of Israel, at the preservation of the features in it most worth while, those features being its moral qualities. They were trying to keep religion ethical, to hold religion and morality together.

At once I meet the objection that I am reading back into the activities of the prophets the formulated ideals of a later age. I am told that it is comparatively recently that Christianity as the union of religion and morality has become imperative to the mind of Christianity itself; that my method assumes a grasp of moral theory by the prophets which they did not have, that a true method would be to look, not backward to the prophets from the vantage ground of two or three thousand years of ethical reflection, but forward from the limitations of their own time. To which I reply that this is not altogether possible. Modern study cannot strip itself of all that has been learned in twenty-five centuries of interpretation of the prophets. The most we can do is to hold constantly before ourselves the reminder that we do possess this ampler knowledge, and strive not to press our fuller knowledge into the definite consciousness of the

prophets. They did not foresee the long historical consequences of their teaching. They sowed seed, not knowing what fruit it would produce, or, rather, expecting it to yield a different product from that which at the harvest came forth. As William James said, religion is known by its fruits rather than its roots, but knowledge of the fruit helps us to understand the root. Still we are, in this study, moved by a more than strictly historical interest. We are not trying to know the prophets just for the sake of knowledge itself, important and valuable as such understanding no doubt is. We are more especially engaged in the search for all the light we can find which we can bring to play to-day upon the same task as that which absorbed the strength of the prophets—that of keeping religion moral and of making it more moral. The tying of religion and morality together was the purpose of the prophets, and whether they always worked with a self-conscious and deliberate aim or not, they did trace out the courses which after-history—as far as it concerns Judaism and Christianity—has followed. In spite of all the complexities of the life in old Israel—a life which was far from the simplicity we have at times fancied we have seen in it—the prophets spoke directly enough to make their messages, at least in spirit, determinative for the centuries to come.

The situation is a little similar to that in some phases of the study of Greek art. Recent investigations of masterpieces of Greek artistic genius have shown that the artists often worked upon the curve which we know as that of the equiangular spiral—the spiral in which the angle of the tangent to the radius vector remains always the same. We now discern also that in some of their designs they employed a summation series in which each term is the sum of the two preceding terms. Now, the most accurate measurements of some of the Greek creations reveal no discernible slips from the proportions required by these mathematical principles. A goodly total of intellectual effort has, in recent years, gone to showing that the Greeks worked with full knowledge of the principles of what were virtually the same as the modern mathematical formulation. I do not believe that any Greek artist ever so set the formulas down as deliberate rules as to make a record for later times. It may be, as some have declared, that the curves were reproduced by the Greeks through careful imitation of the spirals of the arrangement of the seeds in a sun-flower, or of the curves in some seashells. The indisputable fact is that the Greeks employed the lines, whether as the result of exact measurement of natural forms, or as the expression of a mathematical principle grasped by deliberate abstract

reflection. Moreover artists to-day, we are told, see the beauty of the lines, and of the elements of design founded on them, nowhere better expressed than in the Greek productions. The increase of knowledge both of art and of mathematics increases the obligation to the Greek artists. Their use of the mathematical principle just mentioned for purposes of artistic design is pronounced final, by those most entitled to an opinion. It may be that the Greeks did not discover the designs based on the equiangular spiral by actual measurements at all. It may be that they lighted upon them by direct insight, following the hints given in some natural creations. Surely they did not possess the modern mathematician's knowledge of the equations of spirals. Nevertheless, they married mathematics to art with a finality that astonishes all aftertimes. So likewise the prophets hit upon moral principles whose soundness the increase of knowledge only confirms, and yoked those principles to the service of religion forever. It will be understood, I trust, that I do not consider moral principles capable of being stated as exactly as the formulas of equiangular spirals.

In a word, it was the lot and function of the prophets to make religion moral. But were not all religions moral as teaching that there are duties to the gods that men ought to fulfill? Suppose God is conceived of as a dictator, ought

not men to obey him? So far as this specific idea of God is concerned we shall postpone the problem till a later chapter. Here we content ourselves with saying that the prophets sought to work over all religious ideas to make them conform to a moral ideal. The ideal may at times have been dimly outlined, but it was nevertheless strongly felt. It may have been encumbered with much that was unideal or at least irrelevant, but it moved in the right direction.

As an instance of the moralization of religion let us look at the moralization of prophecy itself. There was much teaching in Israel of old, as in all countries, even including the present, which conceived of prophecy as akin to magic. The craving to read the future has always lent itself to the manipulations of star-gazers and entrail-inspectors and purveyors of witchcraft. There was plenty of this in ancient Israel, only it was not deliberate charlatanry as it usually is to-day. Men were trying out every avenue of knowledge of the future, peering ahead from every possible vantage-point and through every imaginable cranny. The future has from the beginning laid an irresistible spell upon the mind of man; and from curiosity, if for no other reason, men have looked with honor upon anyone who has held out any promise of lifting the veil which shuts our view down to the past and present. We notice that there was very little suggestive of the idle

or frivolous in the prophesying even of those who lived in an age crowded with lookers and peepers into the days ahead. The knowledge which Samuel sought—and Samuel stands near the beginning of the prophetic line—was to be used in human helpfulness, in neighborliness, in the relief of distress. Samuel may indeed have had some power like telepathy, though his knowledge seems to rest upon insight rather than out-and-out predictive foresight. Still, in the justification which Samuel made of his own life as seer and judge, or in the justification which the biblical writer puts upon the lips of Samuel, we are told that what Samuel prided himself on was that in the use of whatever power he possessed he had dealt justly as between man and man, and had accepted bribes from no one. His emphasis was upon that justice in human contacts which is so notable throughout Hebrew history. The surprise is not that there was so much in early Hebrew history that laid stress on magic itself, but that there was so little. Max Weber has somewhere remarked that the Hebrews came early to success as traders because they did not have to rely on tricks of magic and questionings of oracles as did so many other ancient dealers. Weber, I think, called the ancient Jews rationalists in this regard. Rationalists they may have been, but they were moralists also, at least to the extent of insisting upon fairness and justice.

Quite possibly the honesty on which they laid most stress was honesty toward themselves; but, no matter, it was a hopeful sign when religious leaders anywhere began to talk of honesty as a test of the religious spirit. Many religions had enough to say about duties to the gods, and many peoples strove to practice at least an elementary fairness as between man and man, especially in those contacts where getting a livelihood was involved. Some degree of justice had to be practiced in any society that pretended to be stable at all. Even a nation of free-booters would have to agree upon some measurably fair scheme of dividing spoils if the group was to hold together at all. It was the Hebrew prophets who first insisted strongly enough to make their insistence count, that fair dealing to man was fair dealing to their Lord.

From the first also the Hebrew prophets assumed the conditional nature of their predictions. As soon as Jewish prophecy rises at all above the stage of what seems to us like "second-sight," or clairvoyance, or the shrewd guessing which must have been even more common in earlier than in later times, it turns to social and national issues. From the outset the prophets conceive of the religion of Israel as a covenant between God and Israel. Forthwith some will say that the prophets must have held a low idea of God to describe him as having entered into a

covenant with men. Indeed, one of the last utterances which Herbert Spencer put to paper was that he refused to believe that the Creator of thirty million suns ever made a bargain with Abraham. The Hebrews did not know anything about thirty million suns, and it is not probable that they would have used the word "bargain" for their covenant between God and the chosen people. Of the prophetic idea of God we shall speak in the next chapter. We believe that the prophets, in spite of the limitations of the extent of their universe, held a worthy idea of God, and that they also held a worthy idea of man. It is the noble idea of man that is altogether unique, for that idea is held by the prophets without any trace of spiritual arrogance or conceit whatever. The prophets assumed that the people of Israel could enter into morally binding relations with God and could keep those moral agreements.

This becomes more astonishing the longer we look at it. The prophets simply took the moral freedom of man for granted. In this they were themselves free from any of that fatalism which has been such a deadly blight, especially upon the Oriental peoples. The psalmist cried out, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" This is sometimes quoted to disparage

man, but the psalmist is in a mood miles away from that of most of his Oriental contemporaries who, more careful watchers of the stars than ever the Hebrews were, regarded the stars as controlling the fate of men. Men's wagons were hitched to stars in a fashion that Emerson never contemplated. It was natural to the psalmist to sing that God would "visit" men in friendliness, though he wondered at it all, and the prophets had broken the path for the poets.

The prophets, then, take as matter-of-course rights and dignity for men in the presence of the supreme object of their religion. We have all had so much to say about what the prophets specifically teach that we have not paid enough attention to what they appropriate as granted. The chief good which they start with is this value of men as free beings. The question is not important for our purpose as to where the prophets got this assumption. It may have been itself part of the spiritual furnishing which the Hebrews brought to Canaan with them out of the desert, but however or wherever it was obtained, it was distinctive.

The same assumption underlies all the furious invectives which the prophets now and again pour out upon their people. These invectives would have been merely ejaculations expressive of frustration, futile and irrational, if the people had not been free to act otherwise than they had

done. The lament of Jesus over Jerusalem that he would have gathered her children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but she "would not," rests on the same foundation. The book of Jonah was written at a period late enough in the history of Israel to be based on a full acquaintance with the principles of prophecy. It implies the customary beliefs of Israel about prophecy. Now, Jonah's prophecy of the destruction of Nineveh, according to the book, saved Nineveh. The prophecy was a flat announcement that in forty days the Assyrian capital would be destroyed, but the writer assumed that everyone was aware that the sentence could be set aside by the repentance of the Ninevites. That was what disgusted the Jonah of the story. If he had been announcing an inscrutable and irrevocable decree of fate, he might have gone to the capital of Israel's enemies with a grim relish. The reason he did not wish to go was his hatred of Assyrians as enemies of his people, and his misgiving that his prophesying against them might lead them to repentance and safety. If he could stay in Tarshish the Ninevites would undoubtedly be lost. The assumptions here become more and more impressive the longer we look at them. Israel was willing to believe anything bad of her most desperate foe, but the writer knew that his readers would accept the assumption that if the Ninevites turned

from the evil of their ways, the Lord would hear and pardon them. The book of Jonah, by the way, abounds in touches which suggest the peculiarly prophetic conception of the value of human beings as such. The Ninevites repent—the tigerish traits in them, of which Israel had seen so much, disappear before the revealed compassion of the Lord. The children on the streets, who know not their right hands from their left, are dear even to the Lord of Israel.

Fair dealings between men, good will among peoples, mercy as the object of passionate enthusiasm, were at the base of that moral life which the prophets sought to make definitely religious. I do not believe that we could legitimately say that the prophets had given themselves to what we should call reflection on morality as such, but they had a sharply defined direction in which they looked for the highest values, and that was in the direction of human welfare. They did not speak of abstract moral laws, or of categorical imperatives, but they pointed to the highest and best for men. The sacredness of human life was much in their minds. No matter what a man may have himself done, or not have done, he was in himself sacred. The story of Naboth's vineyard is instructive in this respect, the event itself, of course, being quite as significant in the career of Elijah, and in Elijah's service to Israel, as the encounter

with the priests of Baal, whom Elijah fought, by the way, as enemies of humanity. Now, it is impossible to make much of a hero out of Naboth. He was not an especially likeable person on his own account. Moreover the king, Ahab, seems at the outset to have spoken fairly to him about the vineyard. He would give Naboth another vineyard as good in itself as the one he desired, or he would pay a generous price for the property. The sin of Ahab was in the disregard of an elementary human right, a disregard which Elijah construed as an offense against the God of Israel, so deep and dark as to warrant his predicting curses upon the house of Ahab. One peculiarity of Old Testament incidents like this, especially where the prophets are involved, is that so much is made of events apparently trivial in themselves. It is the moral quality of a deed which seems to weigh heavily in the judgment of the prophet. At Ahab's side stood Jezebel, and Jezebel was the incarnation and symbol of the Oriental ideal of monarchy. She stood for the rights of kings. In her eyes the murder of a churlish subject like Naboth was a trifling incident, especially when it was accomplished in a regularly legal process. True, we should say that no issue of public policy demanded the removal of Naboth. The king merely wished a new summer garden. To Jezebel, with her notions of honor due to a king, that was enough.

That reached far enough down into public policy. Elijah was fighting for the same rights when he strove with the priests of Baal and when he withstood Ahab to his face—the fundamental human goods which had value in the sight of Israel's God. He was acting indeed in a spirit of sound statesmanship, but even apart from any conception of public policy he would have spoken as he did over the dead body of Naboth. A human being had been put to death for standing on his rights. That Naboth may not himself have been respectful to the king had nothing to do with the essential merit of the case. Now, I insist that from the point of view of the time—outside of Israel, I mean—the objective incident was of little consequence. Taking the course of history throughout, men by the hundreds of thousands have been put to death for offenses against rulers no worse than that of Naboth against Ahab. Indeed, we should not have to travel far back into the records of most nations to find parallel cases a-plenty; and if we looked closely enough, we might find some in almost current history. Jezebel had acted true to the standards of her class. Naboth was of no significance, and Elijah was a fool worthy of death for making such a to-do about nothing. Even in the early days prophets were condemned as makers of ado-about-nothing.

I wish to return for the moment to considera-

tions apparently more commonplace than the incident of Naboth's garden. It is not necessary for me to remind you that after the preaching of the great prophets of the eighth century before Christ the codes of Israelitish laws were indelibly stamped with regard for human welfare. Deuteronomy was an attempt to express the values which seemed supreme to the prophets into as exact legal codes as might be. Biblical students differ as to the success of the attempt. Even before Deuteronomy, however, there were abundant traces of emphasis upon moral obligations to righteousness in human contacts as a religious duty—and the later thinking of Israel never got away from those same values. Take an expression from the Wisdom literature of Israel which echoes a prophetic ideal. A false scale is an abomination unto the Lord, we are told, but a just weight is his delight. For sheer boldness of conception this sentence is astounding, though trite enough to us of to-day. The conceptions of the nations around about Israel do not belong on this level. The gods of those peoples did not care what their followers did to one another. Their whole attention was on what their followers did to them—that is, to the gods.

The scale is the instrument of everyday honesty. The prophet who spoke of God's delight in just weights was no doubt thinking of honesty itself in the market place and on the street; but

glancing through all the centuries and seeing how much moral progress has depended on the discovery of and use of instruments of honesty, we can detect a genuinely prophetic gleam of rare value in this hailing the scale as the object of divine delight. Professor C. H. Judd has somewhere reminded us that honest thinking became possible in full degree only with the invention of the Arabic scheme of numerals, which made exact counting of large numbers possible. The oft-remarked improvement by the Arabic characters over the Roman system of numerals as tools of counting has its significance for moral progress, and the old-time word about scales and weights has similar pertinence.

The moral message of the prophets dealt with the human values, those having to do with the sacredness of the human person as such and with all the contacts between persons, the perception of these values attaining at last a direct insight which dispensed with formal argument. Those teachers of ethics would mislead us who tell us that our minds have unerring direct vision, on the one hand, as would those who, on the other hand, would have us believe that because men lack infallible moral perception, they never have valid insight at all—insight which simply announces its findings, to let them win their way by their own worth. The prophetic movement is to be judged by its power to select out of the

mass of facts of an era the significant for the highest and best for men, and by its instinct for moral direction or orientation. There were many features of the religious life of Israel to which the prophets paid no heed, features which seem strange to us to-day, some of them survivals of the manifestly primitive in Israel's ethical experience. The prophets ignored many of these, likely because these survivals had passed into the stage of insignificance. In reading the history of times far past we often make the mistake of assuming that the people of earlier days were always ponderously serious, always totally conscious of the full meaning of all their customs. So that when we read that a people of a given period preserved customs which had had a sinister human significance in a still earlier day, we assume that the customs were preserved because of that same significance, whereas in the later day they may have had no meaning at all. On the streets of any large American city we may occasionally see amulets worn as personal adornment, some of them having possessed originally very dark suggestiveness indeed. Nobody would exhibit to-day, in a land like ours, more than a passing curiosity toward these amulets. Or, to take a more pertinent illustration, consider some hymns to be found in many of our official church hymn books, especially in denominations in which it is difficult to get changes in

official publications quickly made. A historian of a thousand years from now, looking through the authorized hymn book of many a church of 1930 or earlier, may be disturbed by the low plight of theology, of poetry, and of good taste revealed in the authorized songs. Such condemnation, however, may be faulty through oversight of some simple questions, such as, for example, Were the hymns sung at all at the given period? and, How seriously were they taken when they were sung? This might open up the interesting inquiry as to what sincerity, or even seriousness, involves in hymn-singing. Now, the prophets seem to have accepted without comment many features of the life of their time which seem to us to-day immoral, or of dubious moral value. Those features may not have attracted the attention of the prophets at all, or if they did, they may have seemed to the prophets without moral significance. The prophets may not have known what their original purpose was.

Again, as we consider what in our day is likely to be called the relativity of the message of the prophets we must remind ourselves that some moral causes reveal their inner worth—or lack of worth—only after long periods of social development, or even through their consequences, consequences which may have been late in declaring themselves. There are many propositions which sound altogether innocent in their

first statement, but which in actual results do harm; or practices which might be innocuous in a primitive society, or in a small group, that might be perilous under more complex conditions. Again, speaking of the aspect of the relativity in our problem, let us never forget that the prophets are somewhat to be regarded as specialists. We shall have occasion later to consider that the prophetic conceptions appeared in a measurably definite and consistent order, but that does not alter the truth that when they appeared they came as the words of men in a degree specialists. Hebrew tradition has indeed glorified Moses as the first of the prophets, and the representations of Moses give him a notable all-aroundness, but the prophets as we customarily think of them—indeed, as we see them when Hebrew prophecy comes to its peak—can fairly be called specialists. This, of course, implies the relative element in their messages.

The prophecies have on them the marks of the social soils out of which they spring. The prophets all start with what is actually under their eyes—Amos with the dissipation and injustice at the court of Samaria, Hosea with the looseness of Israel before the seductive licentiousness of the Canaanite baals, Jeremiah with the shortsighted folly of the political leaders of Jerusalem blocking him at every turn. Some words about the psychology of the prophets will

come later, but here it is enough to set down that the prophets began their thinking with the concrete facts before them. Those facts made upon the prophets definite and specific impressions, and so impressed themselves upon their consciousness that they felt they had the truth about them. The outcome was that the prophetic insight seemed to handle the facts without any intermediary formal moral reasoning.

Moral intuition has sometimes been so described as to warrant the inference that it is a peculiar gift, born into the soul of him who has it, that soul being in a receptive or even a passive mood. The intuition of the prophets does not seem to be passively receptive. The consciousness is alert and keen, with every ounce of its power at command. What seem like instantaneously expressed judgments are at bottom the outcome of the quick power developed through slow brooding. The prophets came to an *awareness*—I do not know any better word —of human values as the goods of chief concern in their religion, or to their God. I do not mean that they treasured these values just because they thought God did. Probably if they had fully developed their ideas, they would have said that God estimated such values as good on their own account.

It may be asked why I lay so much stress upon moral values as human values. My reply is that

I am trying to understand the prophets, and it appears that the prophets aimed at keeping religion moral by the constant exaltation of the human values. Some of us, perhaps, think of morality as having to do chiefly with the feeling of "oughtness." It might appear that if I am to speak of increased moral values as due to prophetic influence, I ought to lay central stress on the development of the sheer inner purpose to do right as such. The emphasis on a will-to-do-right as something in itself is not a characteristic of Israel's thinking. There was little formal ethical reasoning. The prophets assumed the moral feeling and the object of that feeling as bound up together. It would not have meant much to them to have heard that men may feel deeply impelled to a course—with a feeling of "oughtness"—and yet that the course may be mistaken. If the course had been wrong, the prophets would likely have called the feeling that led to it wrong. Without trying to unravel their moral activities into various strands the prophets came to a sure awareness of what was, or was not, in harmony with the human ideals called for by Israel's religion.

Suppose we look for a little at the high crest of utterance in Micah as to God's requirements from man. We note that the passage comes just after an allusion to human sacrifice. "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit

of my body for the sin of my soul?" Consider for a moment an argument or two that might have been used in Micah's day in behalf of human sacrifice. To begin with, human sacrifice indicates a surpassingly earnest spirit. The power of "oughtness" must have been powerful indeed to drive mothers to consent to the death of their children. I can well imagine the heart-searching which a priest of a religion round about Israel might have caused to sensitive consciences in Israel by a call for sacrifice of the first-born in order to manifest entire religious devotion. The religious conscience is always prone to torture itself with the questions; Have I done enough? Is this the utmost I can do? Am I genuinely sincere? So that the Jewish prophet was not facing an easy task when he spoke about child-sacrifice. Over against the demands of the heathen systems his exhortation about loving mercy and doing justly and walking with God may have seemed to many a desperate hearer to be lacking in religious strenuousness.

Again, the believer in human sacrifice might have made an argument for his case which would have been a bit baffling to an opponent. The heathen religions were, most of them, nature-religions of one type or another. They sought to make adjustment to the earthly forces in the midst of which men must live. The peoples

round about Israel felt themselves in the presence of unseen powers which could be brought into measurably friendly terms with men, or at least terms friendly enough to forestall interference by those gods. There were gods of fertility to be satisfied before the fields would yield wheat or the vines bear grapes. Much of this worship of the powers that showed themselves in sunshine and rainfall may have been beautiful, though even at the best it opened the door to licentiousness. There is another side to nature, however, than the sunshine—a frightfully cruel side. It is not to be wondered at that men in early times feared the gods as heartless. Men feel to-day that nature is cruel, or indifferent to cruelty, which is about the same in the end. Tennyson has told us that nature, red in tooth and claw with ravin, shrieks against our creed. To the ancient nature-worshiper the gods of nature were the only gods, and if those gods were red in tooth and claw with ravin, it was wisdom to make sacrifice to the ferocity which called for ravin. We of these milder days can form no idea of the intensity with which such a belief as this of ferocious nature-gods can terrify minds that know nothing better.

Furthermore, in all probability the sacrifice of the first-born may have often seemed justified by results. Calamities may have appeared to be averted by such sacrifice. The religious temper

has always been peculiarly likely to pick facts when judging of the actual working of religious systems. Human nature has in all such judging been a fairly constant quantity, and to this day believers in religion of whatever sort claim the facts which indicate success for their own beliefs or practices, and ignore all others.

The mighty utterance in Micah, then, was not merely a happy comment on the demands of religion in the abstract. It was not the deliberately reached judgment of a thinker poring over religious issues in isolation from the life of the ordinary masses of men. It was, on the contrary, a judgment to which the prophet had been forced by agonized brooding over the dangers immediately confronting his people. The spiritual energy put forth in forging the statement can be guessed at from its brevity, from its seizure of the indispensable essentials, from the spiritual exactingness of the demand itself. I said a moment ago that the believers in human sacrifice might have concluded that the word of Micah was contemptibly trivial and easy for an earnest worshiper of the gods. Such a mistake, however, would have arisen only out of moral dullness, for doing justice and loving mercy and walking humbly with God call for the sternest type of devotion. In this year of our Lord 1930, Christians living according to the best light they can find, are aware that even the most objective of

these requirements, namely, doing justly, can be attained only approximately. Schemes of justice as between man and man have never been more than roughly satisfactory. As for loving mercy, that is still a counsel of perfection. We honor the merciful man, but, except when his mercy is directed toward ourselves, we do not stir with any positive enthusiasm for him. As to walking with God, we have scarcely begun to realize the meaning of the phrase and, by the way, it is to the glorious credit of the prophet that he could believe in a God with whom one would be eager to walk. The gods of the heathen were not companions that one would desire for intimate fellowship. If incarnated as men, they would have been repulsive.

What I mean to say is that the final announcement of such a duty as that of Micah, over against the practice of human sacrifice, rests finally upon straight moral insight into the sacredness of human life as such. I do not mean that the prophet attained this insight by the exercise of any *a priori* faculty. It was no doubt the outcome of long brooding, but when it came, it appeared to stand by itself, making its appeal on its own account, without any claim of support from formal abstract reasoning. The Hebrews were not given to the abstract.

It is important to emphasize and re-emphasize that in Israel the recognition of the validity and

authority of the prophet's message came to depend upon the appeal of the message itself to the moral sense of men. In the earlier days—or the later days, for that matter—there were in Israel official, or one might say professional, prophets who gave themselves mostly to saying what their superiors desired, be those superiors kings or the mass of the people. Their expectation was that official authority would itself validate the message. The kings themselves, however, soon became suspicious of such prophecy, even when, as in a famous instance, four hundred of them were unanimous that a king should go to war. Next, a prophet's validity came to depend upon whether his predictions were fulfilled or not, but that test too proved not to be satisfactory, for the prophecy was always conditioned upon moral factors. Finally, the authority of the prophecy came to rest upon the moral content of the message itself, its straight appeal to the noblest and best in men. The ideals of world-peace have never been better framed than by the prophets, but the ideals themselves never have been realized, and some of the loftiest of them can never be realized. Isaiah declared: "In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and Assyria, even a bless-

ing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance" (Isa. 19. 23-25). This prophecy was not fulfilled and cannot now be fulfilled with any such literalness as the prophet's words explicitly signified. Isaiah was not dreaming of events thousands of years after his time: yet the glory of his prophecy will remain, though the nations which could literally have fulfilled it have perished from the earth.

It is the purpose of these lectures to look at the prophets for the general directions they can suggest to us for our day. The prophetic ministry is, first of all, one that gets moral values, stated in human terms, enforced upon the common consciousness. In a series of lectures like these we have to consider separately factors that in reality are laced together—for example, moral values as revealed in the idea of God and as duties for men. Making allowance for this togetherness of all the factors, I nevertheless say that the starting-point for the study of prophecy in its bearing upon our life to-day is the emphasis on the human ideals, that emphasis sounded as the prophet sounds it, by direct announcement, or proclamation, without necessarily any elaborate attempt at argument or persuasion. For our purpose it is not necessary to pay attention to any of the positions of the

various schools of moral theory. The process by which the prophet may have attained to his insight—by swift intuition, or by observation of social forces actually at work, or by prolonged reflection and brooding, or by a co-operation of all his faculties—makes no difference to this discussion. The prophet speaks out of a living sensitiveness to the highest welfare of men.

Some years ago I traveled in a country where the officers of the law believed they had to carry heavy whips to preserve order in the streets of the small cities. The first time I saw a burly and powerful policeman, as we should call him, strike a native of that country for some little offense I was almost sickened. It was not that the pain caused was severe, for the native scampered out of the way with a whimsical grimace. I had come from a land where striking men with whips was regarded as a violation of axiomatic human rights. Now, after a day or two in that country, I became enough accustomed to such spectacles to cease to notice them. I suppose that for the most of us this quickly formed callousness is a protection. Our sympathies, otherwise, would be always so deeply aroused that we could not get our duties in this world performed. With the prophet, however, it is different. He cannot adjust himself to sins against the human ideal. He cannot become thick-skinned to distress around him. I shall say often enough

before I am through that the prophet is not the only useful person in dealing with the human values. In the actual detailed working out of plans to realize the highest worth of men the prophet is sometimes of slight consequence or may even be a hindrance. He does not have the equipment for the shaping of legal codes. He does have, however, his own peculiar power and he should use that power to the full. He cannot become adjusted to things as they are. If his outcries are nothing but the symptoms of his own woe at the spectacle of the woe of others, they are immensely worth while. They create a situation which sooner or later must be met.

The illustrations I have used may seem to imply that I am thinking of the prophet as stirred only by the violation of the more elementary human rights. I do not intend such an implication. I certainly am not thinking of the prophet as wrought upon chiefly by physical suffering. The prophet seemed of old, and his spiritual descendants seem still, to be keenly aware that some actions and attitudes are not proper in themselves in relation to men and women and children. The genuine prophet has a grasp on the higher proprieties. Read the invectives with which the book of Amos opens. The offenses of the nations which call forth the prophet's rage are not those which have to do only with material outcomes. They are sins against human

ideals, such as burning the bones of the king of Edom in lime. Men and peoples ought not to be treated as if they were not men and peoples. There is no arguing about this. It is assumed that the hearers of the prophecy of Amos will understand without comment.

I must again and again insist that I do not wish to thrust back into Hebrew prophecy the formal moral systems of later ages. Especially am I trying to keep clear of anything suggestive of absolute elements, as if the prophets appeared at the outset with a complete message valid for all time. Their seizure of their ideas was conditioned by the factors that always shape such seizures. They were men of their own centuries. They had no *a priori* faculties of moral apprehension that took them out of the category of thoroughly human beings. They would not have known what the word "absolute" meant, if they had even heard it, or had heard anything like it. They were men living at definite dates and places, sharing the general conceptions of those dates and places. They differed widely from one another. They all had, however, though in varying degrees, convictions as to the worth and sacredness of human beings. On the whole, they pointed in the direction of higher and higher human ideals. If there is any absolute worth in their messages, it must be sought in the direction toward which they point and not in the

concrete content of the message at a given moment. It may be objected to what I have said about the prophetic regard for human values that the prophets conceived of those values as having to do solely with their own people. Through long periods of the history of the people of Israel this is likely true. The prophet dealt chiefly with his own fellow-men, but once the sacredness of an Israelitish human being as a human being on his own account was recognized, the acceptance of the sacredness of men as men anywhere was only a question of time. Provision was soon made for the kindly consideration of the stranger in Israel on the ground that Israel was once herself a stranger in the land of Egypt. Here we see the dawning realization that men anywhere have value. The reason assigned keeps the formal place of superiority for the Israelite, but sounds like one purposely sought-out to justify regard for a human value. The Old Testament prophetic movement closes with universalism—as regards the inherent sanctity of men, I mean—sounding full in our ears. If there are occasionally notes that seem to fall short of universalism, let us not forget that the ideals of the prophets as to human values have not yet, even in 1930, been wholly honored.

II

THE PROPHETIC IDEA OF GOD

We proceed to consider the prophetic attitude toward the idea of God. In a study like this we must not forget that we are taking apart factors which in reality are inseparably intertwined. We are to think first of prophets as making moral, and more and more moral, the idea of God which prevailed in their time. Separation of the influence which the growing realization of human morality exerted upon the idea of God and the influence which the more moral idea of God exerted upon human morality is possible only abstractly, for the actual influences were mutual and reciprocal. The prophets no sooner dreamed of a morally better life for men than they made that dream interpretative of the nature of God; and they no sooner got a firmer grasp on the moral qualities of God than they made those qualities re-enforce the idea of larger and better moral life for men.

Again, in studying the total content of Israel's religion, we must remember that the elements are all bound up together. It is artificial to treat the idea of God as if idea could exist as idea apart from whatever mystical or volitional

factors enter into it. Still, the separate study of all these factors will do no harm provided we are careful to keep our eyes open to what we are doing.

At this juncture someone raises question. We have avowed that the prophets assumed that the human values are ends in themselves. If we go beyond this, we are told, we are in danger of drawing conclusions about the universe which may end in defeating the message of the prophets by reducing men to a secondary place, or by making the values which we call sacred not so especially sacred after all. Inasmuch as these lectures have to do, not with the prophets as the objects of critical historical research, but as practical guides for the actual ministry of today, why not keep the emphasis on the human values as ends in themselves, and avoid theological speculation?

This question comes out of the humanistic temper of the present hour, an hour weary with what it pronounces barren theology and metaphysics. We have the human values—let us make the most of them. It is one of the widespread notions of our day that little of value for religion comes from metaphysics. Goethe said over a century ago that a metaphysical speculator is like a man on a blasted heath led round and round in circles by an evil spirit. Especially, we are informed, is the plight of him who

seeks religious help from metaphysics hopeless. He gets nowhere, and what movement he can make leaves him worse off than before. It is an evil spirit indeed that urges religion toward metaphysics.

This objection would come with better grace from those who are not such confirmed metaphysicians as are the present-day apostles of humanism, using the term in its restricted, almost technical, application. The humanist has to admit that there is an objective world of space and time in which men meet. As soon as he refuses to allow what he learns about man to help in the interpretation of that objective world he has passed judgment on a metaphysical problem. The inconsistency here is all the wider from the fact that the humanist allows the faculties of men full play in making whatever interpretation of the objective order "the scientific method" seems to call for. If closely pressed, the humanist would probably say that all this theorizing about the universe—if the objective order is a universe—is in the nature of practical assumption, with, as John Stuart Mill used to say, a "reasonable degree of extension to adjacent cases." This, however, does not help us much. When "cases" are separated from one another, as the scientists themselves tell us, by distances of millions of light-years, we have conclusions which hold good throughout the physical uni-

verse. "Adjacency" loses all of its customary meaning.

Men do not shrink from metaphysical reflection—or at least from metaphysical reflection in the etymological sense of "beyond the physical" —if that thinking be made at all vital. The theories of Einstein to-day are as taxing on intellectual resources as any system of metaphysics ever devised, but they are not sneered at. Even though the untrained cannot understand them, they think of them as somehow embodying a fruitful principle, or as trying to push such a principle to the utmost. Now, the prophets were not metaphysicians at all, except in that they were trying to put large constructions on human values.

Perhaps some of the present-day criticism of humanistic stamp comes out of our limitation of the personal to the human. The prophet did not formally argue from the existence of human persons to the existence of other orders of persons back of natural forces. In the beginning at least the prophets shared the beliefs of their age and did not doubt that they saw in nature the activities of spirits. They were concerned, however, with the moral values of all existence. The later prophets, of course, laid the foundations for the ampler beliefs in theism. They did this almost instinctively. It was inevitable that if they seized a moral principle of universal sweep, that

principle carried with it implications as to the nature of God, conceived of philosophically; but they did not reason philosophically. They reasoned ethically, and gave force to moral conceptions which simply had to be taken into the account as men thereafter spoke of God. They were willing to follow the moral values wherever those values might lead them.

It is a fair charge against the humanists in religion to-day that they do not make enough of humanism in moral realms. They lay heavy stress on the scientific method, but forget that the scientific method is as man-made as is moral theory. Without entering at all into any of the intricacies of even the most elementary phrasings of idealism, we may be permitted to ask just how much of this universe would be left if all consciousness and will could be withdrawn from it. Color and sound would disappear as color and sound, even if we held fast to them as wave-movements. That would strip off all the value for artistic purposes. Even the power of measuring the universe would be gone. Now the humanist admits this, but the instant we seek to construe the Power back of the universe in moral terms he tells us to limit the significance of morality to the human. In the scientific attitude to the universe the only values we can reach are those that make in the deeper sense a "human appeal." Scientific values must come within

thought or go out of existence. There does not seem to be any sound reason for the squeamishness of to-day's humanists in their attitude toward the question as to the moral nature of the back-lying reality.

I am aware of the danger of making the prophets too strictly philosophical in realms where they had no notion of being philosophical at all. They accepted the conceptions of their day concerning divine existence and sought to set them in better moral light. It is possible for the humanist to say that philosophical and moral reflection since the day of the prophets has retreated from the interpretation of a world of the divine and of the human as alike under moral law, and has limited such interpretation to the world of men alone. Sounder thinking, however, may lead in another direction. Instead of narrowing the moral values down to the human it may follow them out as clues to the interpretation of all reality.

The prophets thrust their moral conceptions into the life of their times much as poets cast their songs before the world. They prophesied because they must, and left their prophecies to make their own way in the consciences of their fellows. The prophecy was an actual word, veritably a deed, to be taken account of. The prophecy had its start in what the prophet observed in the society around him. It came out

of life and was thrown back into life. Sometimes the prophecy was abundant in implications which the prophet had not himself followed through. Sometimes the utterance not only set forth a positive truth, but opposed a current teaching, as when the prophecy not only developed the idea of an unseen God, but ridiculed the making of idols. Again, as in the Second Isaiah, the author developed a conception about which there had presumably been more or less discussion among his people already.

Long before the greater prophets appeared a process of humanization and moralization of religion had been going on in Israel. Probably there were prophets from the first beginning, each of whom contributed more or less to the total. Take, for illustration, the moralization of what Otto calls the "idea of the holy." Otto would make the religious feeling consist distinctively in the experience of awe in the presence of what he calls the "numinous," which would appear to be merely a name for the awe-causing. Otto insists that it is a duty to rationalize and moralize the idea of that which causes awe, but still he keeps the emphasis so much on the feeling of dread itself as to leave the reader with a suspicion that if rationality and morality are introduced into the experience of dread, a good deal of the religious has been displaced, but that always is a possibility. What

the prophets sought was to make the holy rational and moral, while leaving it the power to cause awe and reverence. That is somewhat the task of the church even to-day. Take human life itself. The scientific method lays before us more and more facts about persons. It seeks, though without much success, to reduce human experience to some primary elements of consciousness, to show how these units work together and the results they produce. Now, a simple intelligence, without any considerable instruction, can arrive at a mood of wonder about man's life, but with a little more instruction he may conclude that he knows too much about the human to stand in awe before it. Still further he studies, and he not only finds a remainder that does not come within any of his classificatory schemes and his powers of analysis, but he begins to see the marvel of his understanding at all, and the awe increases with the increase of knowledge. So especially with the widening understanding of moral truth. Kant's word is unforgettable—that he regarded with awe the starry heavens above and the moral law within. No matter how the consciousness of duty arises, whether out of one distinctive spiritual faculty, or as the interworking of many factors, the power to accept an ideal as a duty and to follow it is an amazing phenomenon.

Now, the prophets of Israel, including those

who wrought long before the days of Amos, let us say, had this power to see the sacredness of men, and men did not ever become commonplace to them. They regarded the awe in the presence of the human value as an essential of religious feeling, and they never lost the awareness of that sacredness in the midst of the most prosaic commonplaceness of daily experience. The ordinary man is not always an inspiring object, but he never lost his importance in the eyes of the prophet.

Returning for a moment to the dread-causing in religion, let us remind ourselves again of the word of Kant about the heavens, and of the awe with which the stars filled him. Away back in the first ages men began to contemplate the heavens with wonder. The courses of the stars, the hours of their rising and setting, the annual periods through which they were visible—all these early came to be the object of reverent contemplation. Those who are best qualified to speak on such themes tell us that the sacredness of the number "seven" arises originally from the number of planets. It is obvious that the sacredness of the number seven could not have taken its origin from the number of the planets until the star-gazers knew that there were seven planets, and the discovery of the number of the planets was the outcome of close thinking and observation. It was a step toward the ration-

alization of a religious sentiment when those ancient thinkers made their observations of the heavenly bodies. The mass of information on which Kant could and did reflect was immeasurably beyond anything within the reach of the Babylonians and Chaldeans. Galileo and Copernicus and Newton had lived and worked in the meantime. Yet Kant felt a compelling reverence quite as genuine as that of those who in the former days experienced a dread without much knowledge. Suppose all astronomical occurrences could come within the reach of our formulas. There is a profound satisfaction even in seeing facts thus take their places within the realm of law. Was it not Newton himself who used to say that when in his studies he saw that a sought-for equation was within his grasp, he had difficulty in controlling his emotions? There is a deep gratification in seeing equations work out aright, and the difference between the feeling of the first observers and that of an enlightened astronomer is partly that the astronomer's is more intelligent than that of the others. It can be as thoroughly religious as—indeed, it should be more religious than—that of the first desert-travelers who lifted their faces to the night skies.

Now, it is possible that with the rationalization of the feeling of awe about the starry heavens the awe may disappear. The mathematical astronomer may become lost in the

processes themselves, or he may think of them as ends in themselves, sufficient unto themselves. Laboring all his days with highly intellectualized revelations of mind, he may forget the Mind back of all the manifestations. Or the discoveries of the mathematical uses of astronomical information may become but a means of better controlling our journeys over the seas, as if the whole purpose of astronomical research were to make more and better nautical almanacs. In such event there is need of an astronomical prophet—poet would be the apter term—to break in upon the mathematician to whom the stars have become nothing but "counters" in trigonometrical or calculus manipulations, and upon the navigators who have come to look at the heavenly bodies as signposts for sailors, with the arresting recall of all who gaze upon the heavens to their sheer beauty and majesty, their overpowering distances, their ministries to human life above and beyond the gratification of the specialized intellect, or the satisfaction of the needs of commerce. All this might seem sentimental to the scientist and impractical to the navigator, but the shortcomings of both scientists and navigators would appear before the poet's insistence upon the higher ministries of the glories of the skies.

It is from some such angle as this that we have to regard the prophets as conserving the loftiest

moral values. I am not sure that it is warrantable to think of them as primarily either backward-looking or forward-looking. The notion of progress itself was not one which the thinkers of old days held consciously before their minds, though, especially with the prophets, their ideas were dynamically and organically productive. And reactionary conditions in society are not always, or often, the result of the deliberate efforts of selfish and evil men to break down the gains won in the loftier moods of the community, but, rather, the slipping back from, or away from, earlier moral achievements. It was such slipping away, especially from a moral ideal of God, that reported itself at once to the consciousness of the prophets, and caused them to break forth against the evils around them. It was easy for the Hebrews to slip from fine ideals of the human, surrounded as they were by nations that had not much place for those ideals, or that did not use the best in the human for the understanding of the Divine. The prophets did not stop to ask whether they were returning to the old, or looking forward to the new. They were in possession of values which seemed to them everlastingly binding, and they spoke in the name of those eternal values.

There are some teachings in the Old Testament that seem always to have formed a basis for the interpretation of the relations between

God and man in terms of morality and human welfare. Take the conception of a "covenant" connection. It would be difficult to imagine anything in primitive periods better calculated to put a people on the path of moral development than the belief in a covenant entered into by God and man, provided the idea was taken seriously, and the prophets strove to see that it was so taken. No matter how early the doctrine of the covenant got a foothold, it implied at least the rudiments of vigorous moral sentiment. It involved the belief in a God who could bind himself by agreements and who would keep those agreements. I have heard the story of Jacob employed to illustrate the crude ideas of the Divine which obtained among the patriarchs, and to bring out almost ridiculous traits which have often been looked upon as too characteristic of the Jews. Jacob promised the Lord that if he could count upon the divine favor, he would give the tenth of his gains to the Lord. Even if this story of the patriarch is intended to teach the origin of the Jewish tithing system, it is admittedly open to ridicule, *provided we miss an important underlying assumption, namely, that the Lord could be depended on to keep an agreement.* Now, I care not how raw the Israelitish notions of Divinity were at first, there is amid all the rawness this assumption that the Lord can enter into covenant relations with a people and will dis-

charge his share of the obligation. This sacredness of obligations is the foundation of all worthwhile social life whatever. There are other assumptions too in the notion of contract, like the assumption that men likewise are capable of entering into agreement with a Divine Being. Here is the germ of all after-teaching about men as the sons of God. It is indeed true that the covenant was at first with the nation, but by the time of Jeremiah, and certainly by that of Ezekiel, the possibilities of the individual's entering into covenant relations with the Divine had become familiar to the common thinking. Even with the covenant conceived of as between the Lord and the nation, the individual members of the nation knew that it was their own moral attitudes on which the validity of the covenant rested. The belief in God as one to be depended on, the idea of a nation as capable of entering into agreement with the Lord, the recognition that the people themselves could make or mar the covenant with the Divine—all these seem to me to be surpassingly important aspects of the messages of the prophets as moralizers of religion. The insistence upon a covenant in Israel was a distinct moral achievement. There is implied in it the idea of a moral law binding upon God and man alike. It is folly to try to make out that the prophets had our later-day conceptions of law, based as these are upon the

analogies of the formulas of the physical sciences, abstract and impersonal as these are. The Hebrews thought on a much smaller and less exact scale, for they did not have our scales; but they held to the compelling force of law as between persons, and they even conceived of a promise of the Lord as redeemable and valid in the realm of nature, as in the story of the Flood with a promise sealed with the bow in the skies. Without analyzing the content of moral law, or without drawing out into implications the principles of that law, the prophets held to and acted upon the belief that man and God are bound by the one moral obligation. If we are tempted to pronounce this true enough, but only rudimentary, let us remind ourselves that there have been eras, centuries upon centuries later than the periods of the prophets, in which men have conceived of God as not binding himself by law in any genuine sense, but of acting out of whim or caprice.

Another indication of the prophetic moral power was revealed in the long battle of the Hebrews with the lower orders of divinity which received the worship of the peoples of Canaan when the Hebrews came into what was called the promised land. It requires only the most superficial information about the so-called conquest of Canaan to become aware that the conquest was quite different from a quick march

with swift captures and sweeping victories. The Hebrews gained foothold slowly. They had to make their way in the midst of a civilization altogether different from their own. The Hebrew God had been proclaimed as a valiant warrior fighting for elemental human values. The progress of religious thinking in those days involved so expanding the idea of God as to conceive of him as concerned not merely with the austere simplicities of the desert, but also with the fruits of field and vine, with the streets of cities—in a word, with a more complex civilization than that of the old Hebrew ideal. The issue was long doubtful, and was not by any means finally settled even as late as the dates of Amos and Hosea. On the one hand were the stern requirements of the Hebrew teaching about God, and on the other were the seductive appeals of Canaanitish life. The promised land had always stood out before the Hebrews as flowing with milk and honey; and even if, as a realistic commentator once remarked, that meant nothing but goats and bees, the land must have been rich to yield honey and milk enough to grasp the imagination of a people, and to win a characterizing phrase which has clung through thousands of years. The Hebrews had remained loyal to their God through the desert experiences, but those experiences were stern and grim, which made a worship stern and grim seem natural

and appropriate. To worship such a God in the softer airs of the promised land was quite different. As soon as the Israelites heard of the baals which, according to the Canaanites, granted fertility to the fields, they felt that it was only fair that they should worship these gods along with their own Lord. Back of all this was the perennial conflict between a religion which thrives in adversity and one which thrives in prosperity. Even down to our own day it has repeatedly appeared easier to worship in seasons of adversity than in prosperity. Some expounders of the divine purposes with men remind us that every calamity drives men to their knees, and Lowell once remarked that in prosperity men get the idea of God fattened out of them. Anyhow, it is questionable if the human race has yet succeeded in any outstanding degree in holding fast to religion through prosperity. If we are tempted to think severely of the Hebrews for yielding to the charm of the baal religions, let us not forget that we have not always avoided similar temptation, even in the full light of Christianity. Holding to a moral religion in time of prosperity is pre-eminently a duty of the present time.

The task before the Jews was to learn to worship, not the baals, but their God as the author of fertility without yielding to the evil features which marked the worship of the Canaanite gods

of fertility. It may have been at the early dawn of religion that there was something in itself beautiful in the service of such gods, and surely a plausible enough justification could be made for the service. It does not require any long examination, however, to see that the rites connected with fertility worship led straight to licentiousness. It has been the custom to say that such licentiousness does not mean the same to those who have never known anything but nature-worship as to those familiar with a Christian system, and there is, indeed, reason for our speaking charitably of the race's mistakes about religion. It was abhorrent to the Hebrew prophet, however, to think of God as granting favors to men because of any appeal to him in a worship which led to licentiousness. The prophet simply pronounced such worship bestial and indecent, without any argument whatever. He would have felt that anyone who wished to argue about such a matter had not the root of righteousness in him. Now, puritanism like this can easily go astray. It can plant an emphasis on small matters that does not belong there, and can develop quite as much warmth over the little as over the big; but nevertheless the prophets proclaimed for all time the need of a swift moral insight which runs the risk of lighting on a small matter for the sake of not missing one of greater importance.

The fertility rites were indecent and inhuman and could not be pleasing to God. That was all there was of it—and the people could take the message or leave it.

Moreover, if I may repeat what I said in an earlier lecture, nature has dark moods. She can be indifferent or cruel to men. Desperate expedients have, to nature worshipers, seemed necessary to win the favor of the gods, or even to attract their attention. So it appears from almost all study of early nature religion that human sacrifice has been in most, perhaps in all such religion, deemed indispensable. Human sacrifice has often seemed the highest sacrifice, the most men could do not being too much to win the approval and favor of the god. May I repeat what I said in the first lecture about child-sacrifice—referring again to the quotation from Professor Powis-Smith—that parents who are giving their children in sacrifice are at least taking their religion seriously. Religion always is, and has to be, taken seriously by the serious-minded. It demands the costliest gifts, and, in spite of the insensibility which the practice of child-sacrifice would inevitably beget in a community, it would mean to fathers and mothers the utmost they could do and give. Human nature through all the ages is enough like-minded to warrant us in believing that many a mother in Old Testament times would gladly

have given herself on the sacrificial altar if she could have taken the place of her child. Understand now, I am not picking out exceptional nature-religions as demanding human sacrifice. The custom was all too common. Gilbert Murray, in his *Rise of the Greek Epic,* has pointed out in the old Greek masterpieces hints of dark customs of the early days when human sacrifice was evidently a feature of the religious practice of the ancestors of the Greeks. As late as the Spanish Conquistadores Spain could claim to her credit that she had put an end to human sacrifice which prevailed by wholesale in Mexico, and even to-day careful search might find remnants of the practice in various out-of-the-way corners of the earth. The existence of the rite is the proof of the power of religion to claim all from men and to get a response. It is not to be wondered at that human sacrifice found some foothold in Israel. Even a king—Manasseh—felt it necessary to make his sons pass through the fire, and we cannot believe that the king was acting purely in a personal, individual capacity. He was either striving to further the custom among his people or to pay respect to a practice already winning acceptance. The courage of the prophets appears in high impressiveness in their attacking human sacrifice outright. Imagine the feelings of a mother in Israel, who had consented to the sacrifice of a child, on being told that such

sacrifice was an abomination to the Lord of Israel!

The prophets fought human sacrifice by frontal assault, without any trace of indirect method whatsoever. The sacrifice was an abomination to the Lord, they proclaimed. Those who took part in it gave themselves to an abomination. The effect of all such sacrifices was not only harrowing to the worshipers actually yielding the victim, but must have been degrading to the spectators. Travelers in interior Africa a generation ago reported scenes of human sacrifice, the most terrible aspect of the ceremonies being the relish and zest of the onlookers. Such relish meant that the spectators had become sadistic, which is itself a wretched aberration. The prophets saw sadism as inhuman and perverted, and cried out that it offended the nostrils of the God of Israel. The prophet took little account of practical consequences in any calculating sense. Human life was sacred in the eyes of the Lord of Israel. It is interesting to note, by the way, that the revolt against the baals, or perhaps more especially the Tyrian Baal, was so extreme as to appear to warrant bloody measures at the hands of Elijah, and of Jehu, whom Elisha anointed, even though Hosea, not many generations later, was himself horrified by the slaughters by Jehu and felt that such murderous methods violated the very ideals for which

the prophets wrought. The prophets saw only the offense to human values, and to the God from whom those values came.

What I have said thus far applies more particularly to the earlier prophets, whose names, some of them, may have now been forgotten. When we reach the period beginning with Amos, the expansive effect of moral insight on the conception of God becomes especially apparent. I have in earlier pages mentioned the outbreak of Amos against the nations round about because of the inhumanity of the cruelties of those nations. Damascus had threshed Gilead with threshing-tools of iron. Edom had pursued his brother with the sword. Ammon had treated with unspeakable barbarity the women of Gilead. Now, there is little to warrant the conclusion that Amos had busied himself with the formal consideration of such an attribute as the divine omnipresence. He may not have thought of such an attribute at all. What he did have in mind was the moral enormity of the offenses against human beings, and without stopping to consider theological implications, he leaped to the understanding that the Lord of Israel was quite as much concerned with the righteousness or unrighteousness of the nations round about Israel as with the moral conduct of Israel itself. Wherever moral evil was, or might be, it was an offense to the Lord of Israel.

As soon as Amos realized that the divine purpose reached out to men everywhere it was easy for him to announce that the Lord had brought Israel from Egypt indeed, but the Philistines also from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir. To be sure, the patriotic Israelite would hotly resent a word like this, which gave his Lord interests in other nations besides his own. The gain was immense, however, in the increasing emphasis on the sweep of moral ideals. Amos and the others got firm hold of moral principles, and then, because of the intensity of those principles, assumed, without stopping to take formal thought, that the intensity reached out beyond Israel. The white-hot wrath of the Lord of Israel could not be pent up within Israel. Licentiousness and murderousness and cruelty were about the same in one people as in another. If the prophet saw that his God was set against the immoral in Israel, he concluded that God was against wickedness anywhere. Divine interest in righteousness anywhere meant divine interest in righteousness everywhere.

In our theological formulations we have often drawn a distinction between the metaphysical attributes of God and the ethical. I do not suppose that the Hebrew prophets would have made much of such a distinction. Nevertheless, their primary stress was on the ethical qualities of the divine life. They no sooner detected evil

than they abhorred it as an object of the divine wrath; and their conviction as to the intensity of that wrath, I repeat, was to them an indication and a prophecy of the victory of the might of the Lord of Israel over evil everywhere. We shall always need those who reflect long and deeply on what we call the metaphysical attributes of the Divine, but that task is not especially the function of the prophet. The prophet makes a revelation of ethical understanding with which all reflection thereafter about God must reckon. Metaphysical implications are wrapped up in the prophet's moral insight, but it is that insight itself which for Judaism and for the Christianity which came out of Judaism, is the first consideration. The lawmakers could systematize the insight into codes and the poets sing of the law in noble measures, but the essential was the insight itself.

There is no apter illustration of the power of the prophets to lay hold on the most characteristically human experiences to set forth the moral nature of God than the work of Hosea, who took his own unhappy domestic career to teach the attitude of the Lord toward Israel. Israel is represented by Hosea as a faithless wife, following after the baals of Canaan instead of being true to the Lord, the baals who in her mistaken fancy gave her corn and oil and wine. Hosea has himself advanced beyond this notion

—he knows that the good things of the earth come not from the baals, but from the Lord. Moreover, he sees in the faithlessness of Israel not merely a desire for food and drink, but for the gratification of licentious impulses. By the time of Hosea the Canaanitish fertility rites were no longer beautiful symbolisms set poetically to dance and song—if, indeed, they ever were that—but had become sensual debauches. Hosea discerned in his own feeling toward his erring wife, Gomer, an illustration of the feeling of the Lord toward an Israel callous to her divine Protector. Now Hosea advanced a step beyond Amos in his conception of God, in thinking of God more in terms of faithful tenderness toward Israel. A redemptive purpose begins to appear. Indeed, some scholars tell us that Hosea is trying to say that he had deliberately married Gomer knowing that she had already fallen far from virtue, and that he was seeking in his redemptive efforts toward his wife to teach symbolically the purpose of the Lord toward Israel. If this is true, it speaks powerfully for the depth to which moral purpose had struck into the soul of the prophet.

I do not think it is farfetched to maintain that all through the teaching of the prophets there is implied the moral obligation of the Lord toward Israel. The justice which the Lord expected of the nations was binding on himself. A people

which had been chosen from among all the peoples, as had Israel, to be the object of divine care, was indeed under obligations to the Lord like those of a wife toward her husband, but obligation was also upon the husband. If the Lord had chosen Israel, knowing the propensities of Israel toward immoral gods, he must give himself to the help of Israel. This idea is not definitely stated, but it lives in the Scriptures. If prophets like Hosea had been asked if they had intended to teach that the Lord was bound by the same moral obligations as men, they would probably have replied, with some surprise, that they thus believed, but that they had been so absorbed with the mercy of the Lord that they had not considered the mention of his obligations. Again, no matter when the story of the destruction of Sodom was written, it indicates that to early Hebrew thinking the question: "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" had mighty pertinence. There are those who tell us, and that with proof that cannot be brushed aside, that words like these are found in the midst of other expressions that reveal that the God of Israel was at times believed to favor deceit and trickery and to send lying spirits to men. We are not denying this. We are not here dealing with the conceptions which the more ordinary minds in Israel connected with God, but with those more prophetic seers whose ideals

were themselves a prophecy of a better day. Israel, like other Oriental peoples, while in a rough way truthful was cursed with an amazing number of liars. All the more reason to recognize the originality of the prophetic utterance which indicated that the Lord could be depended on to keep his word—tc discharge a moral obligation.

To this lecture would appropriately belong reference to the contributions of the various greater prophets to the idea of God—to Isaiah's firm conception of the divine holiness as moral, to Jeremiah's insight as to the covenant written inwardly on the heart, to Micah's summary of the whole duty of man, to Habakkuk's question as to the justice of God, to Jonah's doctrine of a divine love that reached even the deadliest foes of Israel, to the Second Isaiah's universalism and to the Servant passages with their grasp of the significance of vicarious suffering. These can all wait, however, till a later lecture on the prophets and progress. It is high time that I said something about the pertinence of the insistence of the prophets upon the moralization of the idea of God for our own time.

The function of the prophet is to get moral insights into effective play in our thinking about God. It is his business to grasp moral considerations so firmly and to state them so forcefully that all who think about God thereafter will

have to take the prophetic insight as to the nature of God into the account. It is not the task of the prophet necessarily to make the idea of God logically consistent with itself. The prophet is not likely to be a critical intellectualist. He proclaims his insights, and others must put them into ordered system with consistency and perspective. I may remark here as well as elsewhere, though it is at all times pertinent, that this task of the formal theological thinker is of huge importance. Looking back through the utterances of the prophets I do not think we can find any one of them fitted to give us the well-rounded, soundly balanced idea of God that the human intellect is always striving after. We are here laboring with a problem to which various types of mind must each make indispensable contribution. The function of the prophet is not that of the systematic thinker. The qualities of these two types are not often found together in the same mind.

What would be the prophetic approach to the problem of God in a day which like ours is full of the notion of the supremacy of physical facts which can be exactly measured and precisely described? The abundance of the physical seems often to smother out all values above the material. Of course there is a fallacy here, for it is mind itself that has discovered the facts about the physical. If mind abdicates, it must be in

the name of mind, and that reduces the abdication to absurdity. Still, retorts like this, appropriate as they are, can never be very compelling. We see their logical force, but logic is not always spiritually dynamic. There is not enough *feel* about it. Dealing with moral conviction, however, we have to do with a more efficient power. The prophetic protest can be made to enter as a force into the space-and-time of fact. I am assuming that the prophetic fervor is genuine and sincere. Otherwise it would not be prophetic.

Suppose we look at the prophet himself, just as a phenomenon, on the naturalistic assumptions. He is here, with all his blazing wrath against the evils which would make men less than men, and with his passionate regard for men as the supreme earthly values and as the key to the understanding of the forces back of the universe. The more thoroughly the prophet is a prophet the more truly is he a mystery in himself. What produced him? A universe in which moral values do not count at all? If the universe, wholly physical so far as its controlling powers are concerned, is giving an account of itself in its works, how did it happen to produce such a miracle as the prophet? For a miracle the prophet certainly is, on the materialistic assumption. That is to say, he is an inexplicable break in the continuity of the operation of strictly physical laws, unless the physical

forces are capable of creating organisms which deny the supremacy of the very laws which created them.

The theological inquirers to-day do not trouble themselves with formal metaphysics so much as with the vast questions about the unfriendliness, or friendliness, or indifference of the universe to mankind. There are those who tell us that the universe is positively hostile. There is nothing new in this; men have been saying it from the beginning, though there are now some new accents in the phrasing. For example, a distinguished philosopher, with a considerable following among the English-speaking speculators, is quite sure that man and all his works will perish before the impersonal forces which do not, and cannot, take heed of man. Then this thinker insists that the only way to be free is to acknowledge the utter lack of freedom—and maintain one's nobler vigors to the last. Those who preach this doctrine usually insist upon enough material comfort for themselves meanwhile to enable them to continue their denials of freedom.

The prophet of Israel saw the universe to be quite as dangerous and at times as hostile to man as does the modern easy-chair pessimist. The terrors of the universe were as real to him as to us to-day, perhaps more real. Of course the immensities of the universe did not stagger his imagination as they overwhelm us, but the prob-

lem of the mystery and pain of the created world came upon him as acutely as upon us, for, after all, it is at the points of application to ourselves that the evils of the world are chiefly significant. Death, sickness, accident, earthquake, pestilence, storm, war—these were as real in the first days as in ours. The prophet came to believe that all these were in the hands of the Lord of Israel, but he did not accept his belief with any easy-going lightness. There was no ignoring of hard facts. These have never been more realistically faced than by the Hebrew prophets, so realistically that the charge that the prophet was almost always a pessimist has more cogency than we like to admit. The prophet, however, did not regard terrible facts as opaque mysteries. He saw them as expressions of a moral purpose in the universe. Natural calamities appeared to him as punishments for wrongdoing by the nation. The Old Testament students who will have it that these explanations were mistaken ought not to miss the essential point—that whether his particular explanations were mistaken or not, the prophet was speaking out of a conviction that the world of nature has back of it a rational and moral intent.

The prophet was sure that mankind could make an adjustment to moral principles which would make the universe neither hostile nor indifferent, but friendly. His method was not that

of any artifice or stratagem, but of choice of high purpose in the presence of calamity. The prophet put, at times, the sternest construction on things and events. It is not notably heroic to talk of defying a hostile or indifferent universe, especially when the hostility or indifference is assumed to be that of an impersonal system. The men of old who defied what they believed to be living personal gods were braver than that. The prophet himself did not defy anything except evil. He dared believe in the world as the seat of moral law, and the acceptance of moral law always calls for heroism. The psychologists may be right who tell us that religion is often an escape-mechanism to let us off from the severity of the mortal lot, but it is significant that the more discerning of these same psychologists seldom speak of the Hebrew religion as arising out of any form of "mother" complex—as the expression of a craving for the comfort of mothering. The prophets realized well enough that there is much in the universe which we must simply accept, but their mood was never that of seeking easy paths. Their temper was that of facing truth no matter how grim it might be. There is no contradiction in my saying in the next breath that they looked beyond facts. For example, take Isaiah's interpretation of the course of Israel's history in relation to Assyria. Isaiah faced the possibility of

defeat with astonishing equanimity, all things considered. The common-sense conclusion, based on facts, would seem to be that if Assyria defeated Israel, the god of Assyria was more than a match for the God of Israel. The prophet would not have it so. A defeat at the hands of Assyria could mean only that the Lord was using Assyria as a rod for the spiritual correction of Israel. Here is as frank meeting of the facts as that of the most determined realist. The difference between such attitude and that of realism was the idealism that looked beyond the visible actualities to the moral values of Israel. The prophet spoke out of the conviction of the supremacy of those values. By the way, speaking of Isaiah, the story of the confidence of that prophet in the inviolability of Jerusalem is an illustration of the working of the prophetic mind. Isaiah believed that Jerusalem's moral worth was so important in the sight of the Lord that it had the right of way over everything else whatsoever. His belief in the Lord's control over Assyria came from his deep certainty that Israel's values were too important to be vanquished by Assyria. The values were those of the Lord's own mind, and the Lord would defend them in his own way.

It will be seen that the prophets, at least at the peak of Israel's golden age of prophecy, conceived of God as intensely personal. Experts

tell us that in all early religions there are suggestions of a diffused divine power which the gods are supposed to possess, a *mana* which is not itself conceived of in personal terms. However this may be, the prophets of Israel held to their Lord as definitely personal. Perhaps the personal conception of God will always depend upon the strength of moral feeling in the believers. We do not deny that noble moral lives have been lived without the conception of a personal God—or of any God at all, for that matter—but an abstract morality is for the most of us lacking in dynamic. The normal experience, as it becomes morally compelling, tends to think of God as personal. How much of an argument this is for a personal God is a problem for the philosophers, but the tendency itself is a *datum* with which the philosopher must reckon. Possibly the best way to counteract the present-day trends toward impersonal divinity in its various forms would be to deepen the springs of moral purpose.

There are admittedly obstacles to this argument that the positively moral in religion points toward personality in God. No matter how strongly we incline toward personalism, we have to recognize that personalism to-day stands across the path of some very important systems of philosophic speculation. It seems to me that some methods of handling the idea of the Divine

defeat all moral aims whatsoever, and I think we have to insist upon those moral aims. One such method is that which makes the Divine all-inclusive. Here we have an instance of the terrific drive of human thinking for unity in the Cause back of all things. This pressure for absolute unity works in two directions. It oversimplifies both in the direction of the material and in that of the ideal, and ends in impersonalism everywhere. Oftentimes, indeed, the unity is only that of a word, but even so, it seems to satisfy thinkers by the score. The result is that either on the absolutely materialistic or idealistic basis all things are so merged together in the Divine that moral distinctions are lost. Incidentally, it is amusing to note the horror of some of these same absolutists at the Old Testament stories which openly speak of the Lord of Israel in the primitive days as sending evil impulses to men. We are informed that the Hebrews' conception makes God immoral by declaring him the author of evil in men's lives, as by hardening men's hearts to do wrong. Nobody could for an instant deny that the earlier Hebrew notions were of this faulty character, but men had not then worked the problem through. The prophets themselves, until the later periods of prophecy, were specialists. They did not attain to a rounded conception of the divine nature early. God was to them a good

deal like men, and shared the faults of men. Now, what is not surprising when thinkers have not arrived at a full-orbed idea is certainly astonishing when a sophisticated philosophy talks in absolutist jargon. To attribute evil to the divine nature was in the primitive ages naïve and childlike, but to do so to-day is a flat denial of all basis for moral conceptions. Everything goes to shipwreck if evil is carried into the divine nature. We can gloss this over and confuse ourselves with learned phrases, but the shipwreck occurs nevertheless. There is always more or less of conflict between these two pressures—that for metaphysical unity and that for moral fullness in the Divine. No surer manifestation of the power of the later prophets could be cited than this of the pressure of the prophetic fervor for an ethical dualism.

It is still a question as to the degree of unity we can rightly claim as we think theologically of God. Unity of plan and purpose there may well be, but metaphysical absolutist unity does not get much aid and comfort from moral prophecy. The prophets insisted upon the power of human beings—human beings by the nationful, indeed, but nevertheless human beings—to choose between right and wrong and upon the possibility of their choosing wrong. That much of dualism, or pluralism, prophetic insight will always demand, the regal ability of men to make

selection in their own selfhood, and their responsibility for thus selecting, choices which cannot morally be charged to God. At no matter what philosophical risk, prophecy which is prophecy will always be forcing issues and crises through urging moral values with such power that they cannot be avoided.

Every age applies its own idea of the moral to the Divine. The prophets appropriate the best they can find in men to interpret God, and the method is essentially sound. Of course it is easy for us, as we look back, to detect the inadequacies of the former moral conceptions, but that is partly because we forget the excellences that existed along with the faults. For example, the idea of an arbitrary sovereignty of God seems odd to us now. How anyone could have accepted such a doctrine is a mystery, provided one was to believe in God at all. Nevertheless, the age that held to belief in such a God lived under arbitrary control by rulers. The rulers on the whole ruled well through long stretches of history. With the exception of a rebel here and there men could think of no better God than a despot, provided he ruled with regard for the welfare of his subjects.

We have arrived at a more democratic era, and the prophetic duty to-day is to declare the union of power and responsibility in God. This, of course, with limitations, so far as our under-

standing of God's dealings is concerned. We cannot in given circumstances tell what the moral obligation upon God calls for in concrete deed. There is nothing more futile than to try to announce the specific duties of God, or to make promises as to what he will do as a moral agent. Moreover, a vast total of what goes on in the universe is manifestly none of our business —at least not yet. We are still so deeply in the state of childlike dependency that practically we have to take God as a despot, trusting in his benevolence. Still, this is far, far ahead of blind acceptance of supposedly arbitrary decrees. If we can believe in the union of power and responsibility in God, we can move on with confidence and in peace, even though we cannot imagine for an instant what the divine power, acting under moral responsibility, will do in a particular crisis.

Speaking of democracy, we can see that, in general, the demands of rulership call for God's keeping close to his own kingdom. In recent days there has been much familiarity with the Almighty, a familiarity to which detailed schemes of systematic theology are often prone, abounding as they do in rash speculations even as to the inner constitution of Deity. This is always likely to cause reaction, so that there is now a tendency to put God at a distance. Human thought is forever swinging thus back and

forth, and actions and reactions are inevitable. A problem in a democracy is to keep a spirit of reverence toward power. Still, we do not rightly encourage reverence by so overemphasizing the transcendence of God as practically to withdraw him from the workaday world in which we live. There can be no evasion of responsibility by the ruler of men. It seems flippant to us when the young generation to-day tell us that they are not here of their own choice. Usually remarks to this effect are merely smart quips. There is no deeper depth in the thinking of the young to-day than in earlier generations, but sometimes even youngsters speak more wisely than they know. The youngsters are, indeed, not here of their own choosing. Nor are those of us who are older. There can be no responsibility heavier than that of creatorship. It is not irreverent to think of that responsibility as a moral obligation of God.

Let us suppose that the development of the idea of God is turned over entirely to a formal theologian whose tendencies are so intellectualistic that he is always neglecting or minimizing the moral factors. Such a theologian craves system and unity. He distrusts the moral insights especially that seem to arrive on their own account and in their own time. To use a current phrase, he does not care for the moral knowledge which just "emerges." If he is to shape a creed, he does not wish to be interrupted, and these

emerging revelations are interruptions. They compel him to go back and revise.

The upshot of this is that the theory of God becomes too theoretical. The driving force is the passion for intellectual consistency. All honor to the patient thinkers who strive to rid our theologies of formal contradiction, but they are too prone to put logical consistency ahead of ethical. What a tangle of it the theologians have in days gone made with the systematic doctrine of the Trinity, for example. This doctrine began with a moral motive—to provide for richness and diversity of emotional life in God, to carry moral processes into the inmost heart of God. It has resulted in all varieties of intellectual puzzles. Moral fervor and refinement of definition do not go together. If there is excess of definition, the moral human mind rejects creeds altogether. A God who can be too precisely defined is not morally worth while, for a moral God is always busy with the living interests of living men. The word which tells us that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, has significance for that defining impulse which to set limits for an idea presses the idea to death.

Now, the Old Testament prophet did not have this intellectualizing tendency to contend with, for his people were not much given to abstract reflection. He did, however, point the way to control of such temper by insistence upon the

moral necessities. The burden of the prophetic message is that God is moral, that human morality if followed out leads to the knowledge of God, and that the knowledge of the moral God deepens the springs of human morality. I have heard a theologian of my own church declare that in thinking of God's nature moral qualities do not give us a firm enough foundation. To be sure, we have been singing about how firm a foundation is laid for our faith in his excellent word, but it appeared to this theologian that we need some firmer foundation than the word of the Lord, even with the word conceived of as promise. Against all of which the old-time prophet would have risen in instant revolt. To him no foundation, whether of physical forces or of logical reasoning, could have been firmer than the word of the Lord. For him the word of the Lord revealed the deepest truth about the Lord—namely, a passionate devotion to goodness. The prophet would have admitted the need of brooding long on the laws of God to unfold their spiritual riches, but he would have stood unyieldingly for the primacy of the moral qualities.

The prophet was not a theologian, as we use the word. Nor was he a social or moral reformer, as we use the word. We often see earnest workers for men who break away from religion, because religion does not direct all its gaze upon the needs of humanity. Some of these

are those honest doubters in whose doubt lives more faith than in half the creeds. Some of them work on till the end of the day without slackening of zeal. Many of them cherish the hidden belief that the values which they seek to conserve in men hold good throughout the universe, and others keep going from day to day by focusing their eyes immediately on the day's duties without asking questions, especially guarding themselves against the deadly query, What is the use?

The prophet would not have understood this separation of the thought of God from that of man. Authorities on Old Testament institutions have told us that the connection between members of the same family, or even larger groups, were imagined as so close that the separation of an individual from his family was like tearing out a fragment of actual stuff from a whole of which it was a part. This closeness of intimacy seems to have included the Lord of Israel. At least the primitive idea of sacrifice seems to have been that of a common meal of the family group, or groups, in which the Lord actually shared. The portion of the cooked food which disappeared in smoke or vapor went to delight the Lord literally. So that the prophet knew what an intimacy of bond between his people and the Lord meant. Now, it was the conviction of the prophets, at least onward from

the appearance of Amos, that a bond which could thus be described as virtually physical was to be lifted to the moral plane. The physical bond had been only a beginning, making possible the coming together of the Lord and Israel upon a moral basis. The covenant to which the Lord and the people had alike agreed was to be closer than any natural tie could ever be.

We have moved far away from Israel's notions of the bonds between members of families and between families and God. The idea of moral intimacy between God and man, however, is still valid. The prophetic ideal involves the conclusion that God and mankind form together a moral organism. The usual term is family, except that nowadays we overemphasize the separateness of husbands and wives and parents and children and brothers and sisters, and do not lay heavy stress on the moral bonds. Anything that suggests moral intimacy will serve the purpose. Common devotion to moral ends provides the closest of intimacies. In this intimacy the prophet saw God revealing his nature to men, men gazing upon God, and beholding also the image of God reflected in the faces of one another.

III

THE PROPHET AND MYSTICISM

WITHIN the past few years the prophet has come in for strenuous handling by the psychologists. Some of these specialists have claimed that they have robbed the Hebrew prophet of all significance as a revealer of divine truth by showing that he had the nervous peculiarities of ecstatics in all ages—tendencies to aberration and illusion. Others have declared that in the genuinely mystic state the prophets came into immediate contact with Deity. Hence the importance of their revelation as direct word from God.

Let us begin by admitting that the prophets did show marks of nervous weakness or power, whichever we please. The human mind has always been prone to think of extraordinary nervous states as credentials of a divine revelation. The curtain rises on Hebrew prophecy with the prophet belonging to a band of ecstatics with a technique for bringing on the ecstatic condition. It will be remembered that after Saul received the announcement that he was to be king of Israel he sought out, or came upon, a band of these ecstatics. Saul was already in an exalted

emotional frame, and surrendered himself wholly to the excitement-producing methods of the group, methods which were in all likelihood music and dancing. He reached such a pitch of ecstasy that he lay senseless upon the ground for hours. We are not told that anything worth while happened to him while he was in this trance. If he saw anything worth seeing, there is no record of it.

Elijah too was capable of moments of profound nervous disturbance. According to the narrative, after the overthrow of the priests of Baal, he ran ahead of Ahab's chariot eighteen miles from Carmel to Jezreel. We get a glimpse of the nervous height to which he had been lifted by the depth of despondency into which he sank at Horeb. The vision at Horeb also revealed a keenly sensitive mental state.

There are indications that some observers in the Old Testament days did not take the prophetic frenzy itself overseriously. It will be remembered that one of Israel's kings at a notable crisis became suspicious of the unanimity of four hundred official prophets. We can think of several reasons for the suspicion, but the suggestion may be especially pertinent which hints that the prophetic ecstasy had become commonplace. The onlookers were not always impressed by it. It lent itself to extravagant symbolism, as when on this occasion one of the four hundred

dashed about pushing with horns to show how Israel would push her enemies. The king before whom this exhibition went forward did not find it convincing. We recall too the gibes of Michal at her husband, David, when he led the dancing as he brought the ark to Jerusalem. The experiences of the "writing prophets" reveal unusual uplifts of noble character. We get a clue to the true function of prophecy in such a vision as that attending the call of Isaiah, for example. I do not see how it would be possible to make anything other of this personal crisis than an altogether unusual psychological event. I am not sure that we need call it a trance, but, on the other hand, it was not merely a literary device. The prophet was in such a mental condition that he beheld a divine form, high and lifted up, with the glory of the Lord like smoke filling the Temple. Anyone who has ever actually noticed the inescapable all-pervasiveness of smoke in a room will realize the true-to-fact quality of some features of this vision. The emphasis, however, is on the nature of holiness. If we are tempted to suppose that the vision has to do with "holy" in the old sense of "numinous," to use Otto's word again, let us recall the prophet's references to himself as a man of unclean lips, dwelling among a people of unclean lips. This can manifestly refer only to moral traits. The prophet here is describing his vision so as to keep the

emphasis on the moral. So, then, it becomes permissible to speak of prophecy as working for the moralization of religious experience. Not only did the prophets lead in making moral the idea of God, but they led also in making moral the experiences themselves by which men sought God. Since so much is being made at the present time of the psychology of prophecy it may be worth our while to look for a while at the problem.

We may as well remind ourselves at the outset, however, that there are many, many prophetic insights recorded in the Old Testament which do not appear at all dependent upon unusual nervous tension. As a single illustration we can cite the book of Jonah. Here is a splendidly prophetic revelation which is set out strictly as a piece of literature. There is no hint that any word of the revelation to the author came as the result of peculiar nervous stimulus, unless, indeed, we are just bound to have it so. The book is a straightaway pamphlet, what might be called a political tract, announcing for Jews an astonishingly radical doctrine, namely, that God is interested in Assyrians and that Assyrians can become interested in God. We hear to-day many ideas sneered at as Utopian, especially when they predict radical transformations of society due to changes in human nature. Some of these Utopias appear absurd even

when they have to do with human nature as we see it in ourselves—human nature to which we are disposed to be friendly. Our Utopias do not often reach the stage of prophesying the possibility of changing radically for the better the human nature of our enemies, especially of the enemies of our nation. Jonah did just that. The book declared the possibility of converting Assyrians. This is staggering when we recall the patriotic temper of the Jews. One would have supposed that an utterance like this could have got a hearing at all only if it had come bearing the stamp of a miraculous certifying experience. Here the book is, however, and it makes its appeal by its own straightforward plainness of speech.

There are still those among us who maintain that because prophecy began with induced ecstasy it has no value in religion. In many branches of study we have been able to rid ourselves of the fallacy that the history of an idea determines the worth of the idea, but not in all. In some realms the claim that truth is not truth because of the unseemliness of its origin is absurd at a glance. Take a table of logarithms. Here is one of the most potent time-saving devices ever contrived by the human mind. Suppose, now, some student turns away from the table of logarithms which has ten as a base and insists upon its worthlessness because it is the

last step in a movement which started with man's counting on fingers and toes. To begin with, nobody would ever naturally suspect that the logarithm is descended from any such origin. It is too distinctly a creation on its own account. By the time we reach mantissa and characteristic we are far enough away from all reflections about the tens of fingers and toes. Here are the processes, useful in themselves. Even more pertinent here is the reminder that among the Greeks some mathematical studies were carried forward only after religious sacrifices. The gods were felt to be at work. We are told that the announcement of the proof that the sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles was attended by the slaughter of an ox. Ox or no ox, however, the proof stands by itself. We need not have the scantiest shred of information as to who first formulated the proof, or the circumstances under which it was formulated. These items may all be interesting to the point of picturesqueness, but they do not touch the validity of the geometrical proposition one way or the other. Of course it is easy to remark that mathematical propositions are in a class by themselves, altogether apart from religious considerations. This is not so certain, however. The appeal of mathematical propositions was so convincing that the Greeks regarded them as expressing divine truth. Pythagoras taught

that the essence of being itself was number. Probably much of the attempt to connect religion with number in the days of the Greeks came, not from the desire to add to the regard for the mathematical discoveries, but just to recognize the greatness of those discoveries. I can easily imagine a society in which a thinker, reflecting upon the proposition that the square on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides, might very naturally suppose that he was contemplating a divine truth. If there has ever been any proposition beautiful and convincing in itself, it is this. The after ages have not exhausted its fruitfulness, as readers of Einstein know. To-day, when we are looking for signs of mind in nature, we still turn back to remarks like that of Plato to the effect that God, in creation, geometrizes.

If, however, someone urges that mathematical truth stands by itself, we can turn to artistic expression for illustration. Suppose we come upon a Greek temple or sculpture, or a Gothic cathedral. The first force that strikes us is that of the beauty itself. Possibly the beauty is so compelling that anybody can appreciate it, in which situation it may be that even the popular imagination will begin to create stories of miraculous dreams vouchsafed to the builders. All these are tributes to the sheer beauty itself. The

Mormon auditorium at Salt Lake City is a marvel of acoustic perfection, a perfection so complete that, in the days of my boyhood, the older Mormons used to avow that the builder had been miraculously aided. In fact, the building is what it is through its inimitable seizure of and obedience to natural laws. The marvel is in that. So with the moral insight of the prophets. The miracle is the insight itself. We stand in awe before that insight no matter how it may have been reached. It is not discounted or added to by stories of dreams and trances and nervous extraordinariness. The sign of the Divine in the prophecies is just the self-evident clearness of the prophecies themselves.

Why cannot thinkers show the same fairness in the realm of moral discovery that they show in physical discovery? let us say. There can be no doubt that astronomical knowledge began with astrology. As we look back to the Babylonian star-gazers we are more and more impressed by the range and accuracy of their observations, and possibly our astonishment is even greater in reading about Egypt. The present-day historian has an amazing calendar-scheme in the placing of events in Egyptian history, and the observations for that scheme were made and recorded by the Egyptians themselves. There was mixed up with the accurate observations both of Egyptians and Babylonians an in-

calculable amount of ignorance and even of fraud, but we do not, therefore, reject the observations.

Another type of Old Testament student is not at all inclined to discount the extraordinary psychical experience of the prophets. He sees in that experience the direct meeting of the human with the Divine. He searches for the direct mystic approach to the Divine, and feels that the prophets are not so much to be valued for the content of their messages themselves as for their mystic experiences. If we wish to have it so, he will agree to speak of the content as testifying to the experiences, rather than of the experiences as certifying the content. The main duty is to see in the prophetic experiences an open path to God and to study them for the possibility of following in that path.

This contention has to be frankly examined to-day, because of our renewed interest in mysticism. I am not an expert in this field, but for our purpose I make bold to attempt to state what seems to be essential in mysticism, from the angle of those who are to-day so strongly urging it upon us. The essential in mysticism, from this angle, is a direct, unmediated experience of God. God is immediately present. Or the human soul becomes lost in God. The characteristic of the experience itself is ecstasy of an ineffable quality. All the mystic can tell us is that he knows he

has been face to face with God. He thereafter needs no further argument, or reasoning. He has been with God. The prophets were men of this type of mystic, we are told.

I wish it distinctly understood that in attempting to understand mysticism I am trying always to keep the prophetic approach in mind. The prophet aimed at judging everything calling itself religious by moral tests and standards. We have the full warrant of their entire outlook and experience for maintaining that no matter how deep the conviction of certainty as to the immediate presence of God in the mystic himself, the only prophetic test as to the genuineness of such a professed experience would be its moral aspects—its moral effects especially.

Let us look at some of the experiences which are classed as pre-eminently of the mystic order. To begin with there cannot be any unmediated experience of the presence of God, unless the soul ceases to be itself and is merged into God, in which event it becomes God. A little later I will try to show that such a complete merging is entirely foreign to the prophetic viewpoint. If the human soul sees God, it looks upon him through the faculties of the human soul. The expectation of that soul, its inherited ways of thinking, its range of seeing, also, will determine the form of the vision. It is possible to say the "form of the vision and not its content," but this

phrasing is practically without meaning, for the form and the vision are not separable. The experience of Isaiah as he heard his call is, it seems to me, the most intelligible description before us of mystic vision granted to a prophet. This remark may seem strange with the experiences of Ezekiel spread upon the pages of the Old Testament with such elaborateness of detail, but the experiences of Ezekiel are those of one already rapidly moving toward apocalyptic. The apocalyptic mood gives itself to the purposeful cultivation of picture and symbol to an extent beyond that of the prophetic. It is not always easy in Ezekiel to trace the line of demarcation between vision and deliberately created figure of speech.

Now, Isaiah saw—what? He saw the Lord high and lifted up. That is to say, some bodily representation apparently not definitely reducible to description. The vision was seized in terms of his own thinking. He saw seraphim, he saw winged creatures, he saw the Temple filled with smoke. No matter how immediate such a vision may seem, it is mediated through symbols already prepared for by the prophet's training and by his own reflection. Isaiah remains on his own side of the vision, and his mind itself contributes the material for the picturing-forth of the symbolism. This is all that immediacy in vision can mean—it means whatever

produces in him who beholds it the conviction of absolute certainty.

We have only to read the accounts by the mystics of their moments of ecstasy to see that what they describe is something that produces certainty. The moment of ecstasy passes, having seldom lasted, to put it in horrible prose, more than half an hour, but the certainty remains. Saint Theresa speaks of a pain of pleasure in ecstasy like a dagger thrust. None of the pictures of the leading mystics themselves suggests anything more than symbolism, some of it crude. I once had a friend who in the moment of what was supposed by onlookers to be his death experienced a vision. He heard the physician pronounce him dead, and instantly seemed to pass to the beyond. All he could say —as he astonishingly came back to earthly consciousness—was that he had moved into a realm of ineffable beauty. He lived twenty years after the experience and never ceased to be under the spell of the conviction of the reality of the heavenly kingdom.

This is about all that can be said of any ineffable experience, for the ineffable does not lend itself to fluent discussion. There is really more that discussion can take hold of in Isaiah's vision than in most of those of later-time mystics. In the later mystics, moreover, the moral aspects are not always self-evident. It is doubtful if

the prophetic mystics ever go to the extent of identifying themselves with God, or of supposing themselves lost in God, except as they regard themselves compelled to proclaim divine messages. The vision of Amos is of divine righteousness symbolized by a plummet line, a vision indeed worth seeing. Isaiah is most aware of the moral distance between himself and God. There is not predominantly the note of rapture, but of unworthiness and of moral responsibility. The same is true of Ezekiel, elaborate as are the details of his visions. There is little to suggest that Ezekiel is absorbed in God. In fact, there is noteworthy difference between the recorded Old Testament visions and the experiences of mysticism which were commonly sought in Christendom in the Middle Ages after the teaching of Plotinus.

We must always remember that it is not permissible to determine in the light of theory what an experience is to be, and then to read the theory into the experience. Nevertheless, we can judge experience by moral ideals. This need not mean that we deny our experience outright in the name of a theory, but we can at least tell whether a theory meets moral demands or not. If, now, mysticism is an experience of outright absorption into God, a fundamental value of moral life has been lost, namely, the distinctiveness of the human personality. As a matter of

fact, mystics are never so lost in the Divine that they forget who it is that is lost. There is something almost naïve, too, in the suggestions of some of them as to the high favor granted them in an experience which has professedly reduced their own personalities almost to a vanishing point.

This absorption-conception does not appear to figure largely in prophetic religious experience. The prophet has an awareness of call, and he has a consciousness of acting as an agent or an instrument. He desires to make his will run parallel to the divine will, he feels himself a spokesman of the Divine, but he never gets out of himself. I do not see how we can see in this anything but an honor to human nature and human personality. The glory of human nature is that it can be filled with the divine nature—but nature is nothing but a law of action. The prophetic assumption was that man and God can act under one and the same law. The personalities remain distinct. Human personality might conceivably cease to be, but it cannot be absorbed into anything else and retain its own glory. All unconsciously to themselves the prophets assumed a distinct value in man's personality as over against the divine. There is no way of fitting any absorption-doctrine into the prophetic assumptions. Philosophic terminology is usually out-of-place in discussing the

prophets, but the prophets certainly were not pantheists.

Moral thinking rests first upon sharpness of distinctions. A psychologist has recently declared the goal of religious experience to be simple undifferentiated mystic vision. How could such an experience be "undifferentiated"? It has to be differentiated from before and after. It has to be of different quality from all other experiences. If it has any content at all, we are on the path to swarms of differentiations. It would seem that a little rigorous thinking here is called for in the name even of elementary moral values. By the way, it is interesting to note that some of the least orthodox of present-day philosophers—like those of the school of Bertrand Russell, for example—are akin to mystic, after a fashion similar to that implied in much of so-called Christian mysticism. Both Russell and the mystics would be vastly surprised to hear this, but the remark is not quite as wild as it seems. For Russell the ultimate facts of the universe are neutrals. Nobody but Russell seems to have any adequate idea of what these neutrals are, but they are neither mind nor matter, at least as mind or matter has ever up to this time been defined. They are space-time-events which exist pretty much on their own account. Just how they are related to one another, and what prevents them from being

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merely mathematical points, have never been told us. Now, when a person is, or has, or enters into one of these moments he is, or has, or enters into all there is of it. So far as that bit of reality is concerned he is, or has, it. Somebody once called these moments, or whatever they are, transparent sections of reality itself. Seizing or being is mysticism of a sort. The mysticism of a considerable amount of so-called Christian teaching is just about that, if it could be coherently taught. The Divine is something like one of these moments which is here because it is. The seeker after the Divine, if there can be any seekers, enters into the moment. He is the moment, or he has it—has all of it. If anyone can make anything of this, he is welcome to do so. How far, however, it is from anything revealed in the experience of the prophets is obvious. By the time we get far into all this fine-spun gossamer logic we crave a return to the rigor of Old Testament moral energy.

A second moral demand upon mysticism is that we must not make it the outcome of any "special" faculty which is not within the reach of normal human experience. I am careful not to say "average" experience. I am well aware that we cannot advance in religious discovery by any manipulation of averages, except possibly in learning something about the human problem with which we have to deal. On the other hand

we cannot achieve much in studying the supernormal unless the results reached can somehow be brought within reach of normal intelligences. A keen student of religion, speaking of the need of extraordinary genius in religion, once remarked that the sharpest eye can see for the whole ship. Of course it can, but what that sharp eye sees can, conceivably, become the common property of the ship in just a little further sailing. The sharp eye sees farther, more distinctly than the duller eyes, but it and the other eyes have a power of seeing which they possess alike. The vision before the sharp eye can be described in terms entirely intelligible to the common eye. If, now, the mystic experience means the vision of a sharp eye, well and good. We can at once learn the direction in which to look, how to focus the gaze, how to point out what we see to others. If, on the other hand, the mystic vision is something altogether itself, belonging to those privileged through the possession of this special faculty, we have before us a different problem. Hegel once said of the universe that it must come within thought or go out of existence. So we must say of mysticism—it must come at least somewhat within range of the possibilities of normal human life, or, not necessarily go out of existence altogether, but at least go out of the world of moral meanings so far as the masses of us are concerned. It is

interesting to note that the more careful of the expositors of mysticism are at pains to say that mysticism does not depend upon a special faculty, that it is a form of, or result of, the development of faculties entirely normal to man. Along whatever path a believer may attain to an overwhelming, unshakeable conviction of religious certainty, along that path he can attain to a substantially mystic experience. Nobody can define what conviction is. It is the result of the coworking of all the activities of the mind, but no one can say just what part this, that, or the other factor plays.

The truth seems to be, taking the world over and the history of religion throughout, that the judgment of Professor Pratt is fair, namely, that everybody is somewhat mystic, or has mystic possibilities, that the achievements of the outstanding mystics are like any other achievements in which the extraordinary person excels in the use of powers which the ordinary person has in less degree. Every man has the power of walking, but not every man is an expert or trained pedestrian. There are men who can walk a mile in an incredibly brief period, and there are others who can walk a thousand miles also in an unbelievably short space of time, but the ordinary person seldom thinks either of speed or long-distance endurance in walking. The achievements of the experts are as astonishing and

bewildering to him as if he had never heard of walking, and yet he walks every day of his life. So in the process and progress of the religious life. The extraordinary character is built up by the exercise of powers that are common enough.

This widespread tendency to the mystic, or power of attaining the mystic, is assuredly reason for the prophetic test of moral ideals in the mystic experience.

William James, when he began to study the varieties of religious experience, gave a turn to the contention that the circumstances under which truth is discovered do not affect the worth of the truth, which we must consider for a moment. What James was trying to do was to assess the worth of religious experiences, especially of abnormal types. He was sure that all religious experiences had to be looked at in themselves whether they came from the use of drugs, or physical exercises, or inner contemplation. With the authority of leaders like James before us it is possible to make a showing against the claim I am trying to urge, namely, that, judged by prophetic standards, religious experiences are of value only for their moral content or their moral power, or as the result of moral striving.

Nobody these days can make much of a case against truth's claim to be truth wherever found, in spite of its lowly origins or its early associa-

tions. There are no high-born ideas which can lord it over all other ideas because of birth, so to speak. Yet, as a matter of fact, if we speak out of the long experience of the race, do the worthiest ideas come from artificial forcings? It may be, so far as truth itself is concerned, that men occasionally get lofty illumination through artificial technique either predominantly physical or predominantly psychical, but, on the whole, this response of the mind to artificial stimulus has been rather thoroughly worked out. I can see, for illustration, that if there had been a date when the intoxicating power of wines or spirituous liquors had been suddenly discovered, poets and seers might have fancied the human race to be on the verge of a new era of insight into the beautiful through the use of stimulating drink. Except, however, in the case of individual experimenters, that expectation was abandoned long ago. Wine, indeed, maketh glad the heart of man, but the glow has no vast intellectual or æsthetic or moral significance. We now know enough about the drugs too, and we know about hypnotism, by oneself or by another. We know about crowd contagion in its nobler and its baser aspects. As the result of our knowledge we are aware that the deeper intellectual insights and the finer æsthetic perceptions do not come through such channels, except that any sort of channel may at a crisis open upon revela-

tion, but only after that incidental, accidental fashion that James so suggestively called release through "trigger-pulling."

How can mathematical truth be reached by any process except that of a purposeful focusing of attention in a given direction? Can men drift into understanding of complicated equations? If anyone fancies that the mathematical realm is altogether different from that in which anything like vision is involved, let him remind himself that it is not so with the mathematical genius; that to the genius a new proposition, or even a new equation whose elements are falling into their appropriate places, is like a vision, and a vision often accompanied by positive emotional ecstasy. Newton used to say that after he had worked long on a proposition, and at last saw it breaking into light, he could with difficulty hold himself steady to take the final formal steps in reasoning. Was it not Newton also who said that the only superiority in mental power which he claimed over other men was that he could hold his attention fast upon a point longer than most men? This would place a will-attitude at the center as the secret of attaining to extraordinary mathematical understanding. We cannot imagine Newton as attaining to truth by passively waiting for revelations any more than we can imagine James reaching the understandings set forth in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

by any other method than that of careful observation and sustained reflection. As in the realm of unusual intellectual endeavor so also in that of unusual artistic achievement. The triumphs are the outcome of purposely directed effort. Dreams may be all right in their way, but their thought content is negligible. How often we awake from sleep under the impression we have dreamed something wonderfully acute or beautiful to find that it is inane and homely enough the instant we awake.

Probably expectation is effective in the direction and outcome of all religious crises. If a worshiper is looking for a falling away into passive unconsciousness, he may thus fall. Suggestion likely is at work. I cannot see how, if our ordinary notion of some Oriental mysticism is correct, there could be much in such mysticism except a lapse toward drowsiness. Now, if religion is to be looked upon as a relief from the deadliness of existence, it apparently accomplishes its purpose in this dulling of the faculties by drowsiness. If religion is conceived of as a respite from reality, the search for unconsciousness is warranted enough. If religion is regarded thus in terms of relief, the ordinary man by the side of the road will take what escape he can, where he can. His experience at least helps get him through the day.

In prophetic Israel the aim was not passivity

of faculty, but self-directed power. It is true that the prophets now and again looked upon themselves as mere instruments in the hand of the Lord, and at moments lay prone before him. The final outcome, though, was increase of power. If it is permissible to think of the relation of the Lord to a human being as adding even to physical strength, we might read the story of Samson; though let no one, please, fancy that I am trying to put Samson in the lists of the prophets. The story, however, does set out one phase of the Old Testament conception of the relation of the Divine to the human. The Spirit of the Lord, according to the narrative, came upon Samson in access of mighty physical vigor. Samson felt himself in the hands of the Lord at such instants, and yet he never seems to have doubted that his strength was his own. It was his arms that pulled down the gates of Gaza, his fists that killed the lion, his legs that outran the foxes. It was regrettable that the divine force had only his fists and arms and legs through which to work—but the power did work, according to the narrative, through those members. The old story illustrates, crudely, to be sure, but in simple fashion, Israel's idea of the Lord's reenforcing the power of a man. And the prophets succeeded finally in getting the emphasis around to the moral powers of men.

Another study of religious experience to-day,

a study in which there is abundant citation of prophetic experiences, has to do with the "unconscious" or the "subconscious" or the "subliminal" and its significance for the content and form of religious experience. Here, again, we have diverse points of view. Some will have it that what arises into consciousness was at first in the unconscious—I use the self-contradictory terminology merely because it is employed in the usual discussion, and I do not know any other. Then the general earthiness, or crudeness, or whatever it may be, of the subconscious affects the worth of all consciousness. On the other hand are those who think of the subconscious as a deep well reaching down into the profundities of the Divine. Readers will recall that the late Dr. William Sanday, in attempting to phrase a theory of the divinity of Christ, made Christ's consciousness the seat of his humanity, and the subconscious—though I do not recall that Sanday used just that term—the seat of his divinity. The Divine would keep gushing up out of the subconscious into the human consciousness.

Both these points of view seem to me about equally mistaken. I think we have to follow Hocking in saying that whatever belongs to the self is part of the self, whether fully conscious or not. It is not something over against the self, except as something not yet fully organized into

the self's activities. James characterized sensation as giving us a big, buzzing, blooming confusion. It is the function of the self to organize what it feels thus, or receives thus, into coherence and order. Now, the prophets were not psychologists, but they organized their thinking on predominantly moral principles. If we are to seek for the marks of the Divine, we have to find them not in the hazy, uncertain darkness of the first perception, but in the dry light of the final insight. The clearness is the true sign. It is strange how persistent is the old notion that the ideas which seem mysteriously born, or which come out of the dark somehow, are those which are most genuinely divine. This whole realm of the subconscious is a sort of down-cellar affair. Just as we used to say, when men were trying to find God in the "gaps" of the evolutionary scheme, that God does not live in gaps, so we may justly say to-day that God does not dwell down cellar. It was the glory of the prophets that they sought to get their revelations into the open. There is nothing more futile than this attempt to support or discount a sun-clear moral statement by appeal to the subconscious. The prophet succeeded in his day in a task which is perennial—that of so stating moral truth as to render it self-evident.

Here may be a fitting place for a word about the present-day attempts to interpret the pro-

phetic experience as "resolution of spiritual conflict," or as adjustment to life and the universe. The modern students seem to think that all spiritual progress comes as one drags out into the light some unresolved conflict which has been lurking in the unexplored recesses of one's soul. The better types of these students say that we cannot make much use of this principle unless we know all about the life with which we are dealing, this being especially true with psychoanalysis. This wise caution is no sooner uttered, however, than some of the newer school rush in to reveal the secrets of the lives of heroes and saints with only a few chance remarks, or phrases from letters, or scant accounts of deeds as data upon which to work. The prophets have similarly been approached from this point of view of resolution of inner conflict. It must be said that, though such treatment of the prophets has been singularly careful and reverent, not much light has been thrown upon them by modern psychological technique. This technique has suggested to us another adjustment than that of finding personal peace. In these days peace is often interpreted as a phase of comfort, and is a mark of much so-called adjustment. The prophets made, or came to, some inner adjustment, no doubt. They could hardly have continued to live if they had not. The peace seems to have been that of a resolution to cry aloud and

spare not. In the profounder moral aspects of their careers the prophets simply could not make an adjustment to life. The prospect of being himself at peace with all the world going morally wrong did not commend itself to the prophet. Of course, I repeat, the prophets did work through to solutions more or less satisfactory, but they, many of them, sounded the note of woe to the end. How many of them saw their prophecies fulfilled? Some of them had the supreme distress of seeing their prophecies made naught by what appeared to be divine action. Nevertheless, even the denial of the truth of what they prophesied, denial by the progress of events themselves, did not shake their confidence in the truth. If the prophets made adjustment through peace-seeking processes which bulk so largely in current study of religious psychology, the adjustment does not report itself in what they said or did.

I do not see how we can read through the utterances of the Old Testament prophets and fancy that they would ever consent to such flight from the world as some mysticism, both old and new, seems to sanction. Much of such mysticism is outright retreat and surrender. It is the sign of defeat. When we heed to-day the demand for the preaching of the "simple gospel," for the turning away from the problems that concern the welfare of men, for the cultivation of inner

quiet—unless the turning away is for the sake of returning to the attack with powers refreshed —we can be quite confident that we are not in the atmosphere of Old Testament prophecy. There is nothing more heedless of ease or comfort or facile adjustments than that prophecy. The longer we look at this the more wonderful it is. The exalted considerations with which we sustain our spirits against a dark universe were not at hand for the prophets. We resort perhaps more often than we care to admit to the expectation of personal immortality as balancing or redeeming the hardships of the earthly lot, but the prophet had identified himself entirely with his nation. In the days before the idea had been surely grasped that punishment does not always follow wrongdoing according to our expectations, and, that on the other hand, suffering is not necessarily punishment, the prophet had rough going. In spite of his prophecies doom did not always follow wrongdoing, and punishment did not always seem to strike the right quarters. The prophet himself appeared usually to be getting the heavy end of punishment. Yet, in spite of all this, he did not seek the adjustment of a comfortable spirit. He held fast to his message in spite of its rejection by the nation it was intended to aid, and in spite of the more puzzling fact that the course of events seemed to leave him in the plight of a

dupe. It really looks at times as if the prophet were so absorbed in his message that he did not care what the Lord did about it. This would be only in the seeming, however. A juster statement would be that the prophet believed in God even when the appearances were against God. There is a sublime passage in the New Testament which declares that God was not ashamed to be called the God of the early heroes of Israel. The context appears to suggest that the reason for the satisfaction of God with Israel was that the heroes trusted God when promises did not appear to be fulfilled. These all died in the faith, *not* having received the promises. We must similarly praise the prophets. They died in the faith, not having received the fulfillment of their prophecies.

The prophetic vision of God was filled with a definite content and had a moral meaning. The prophet is able to describe what he has seen and to tell us what it means to him. Take the vision of Elijah at Horeb. It is no caricature of mysticism of the ineffable order to declare that so far as the religious welfare of mankind is concerned, there is more of benefit in the description of the vision in which the Lord was revealed as the still small voice than in any tumultuous ecstasies of the fiery prophet, though we must not disparage Elijah. Even at his encounter with the priests of Baal he talked sense and let the priests

indulge in raving frenzy. What Paul said when his churches seemed to value ecstasies above all other blessings holds good to-day—that the value of vision and prophecy is in its content.

Just at present some religious leaders are preaching to us that the highest life consists not in what we do, primarily, but in what we are. It is better for us to be somebody than to do something. We are wise to go to the prophets for help in face of preaching like this. If we wished to raise a rather fine point in philosophy, we might remark that there is no being apart from doing. A man cannot withdraw into himself and merely "be." The only way we can tell what a thing *is* is by watching what it does. Its nature is the law according to which it acts. Metaphysical scruple aside, however, what such preaching probably intends is an emphasis on the inner as against the outer life, the brooding, contemplative life being the chief good. Such life and its surpassing value nobody is likely to deny. We are not to think of the prophets as always bustling about like practical fellows absorbed in doing this, that, or the other. The contemplative life may show the rule of an iron will and may be intensely active. When I say that the moral attitude of all religious experience is the essential, from the prophetic point of view, I must protest with wearisome frequency that I do not mean necessarily a fevered rushing-

about. Many of the psalms are gloriously inspired by the prophetic spirit. When such psalms speak of loving the law of the Lord and in that law meditating day and night, they obviously are rejoicing in attention directed definitely toward the law. They are meditating upon it as a scientist reflects upon an equation which charms him by its symmetry, or as an artist broods over the shadings of a picture. There are different methods of becoming unconscious to the world. An Oriental may, as his religious exercise, desire to loosen himself for the hour from the distractions of the world. If he could, he would flee the present existence altogether. He fastens his attention upon something which induces what we might almost call self-hypnosis. He comes back to full consciousness, relieved, it may be, by the withdrawal. On the other hand, the thinker, or the artist, may so fasten his attention upon a point that he loses all consciousness of everything except that one fact. He cannot hear or see anything else. His attention is concentration. It means that all his powers have been, not relaxed, but made to pour through one channel. It is this latter type of experience which suggests the prophet. I may say, as I am about to leave this theme, that the experiences of the important Christian mystics, in spite of what the mystics themselves have said, have always been marked by the presence

of this will-element. The mystic seeks vision by long and arduous moral discipline. At the best his faculties are keenly alert, his sensitiveness to spiritual impression being especially quick.

Now we come to a phase of the vision of God for which, oddly enough, it is sometimes hard to get much sympathy, but which must always be very important. What is the higher type of mystic vision, that which aspires to look directly at God, so to speak, or that which seeks to come into communion with God? Communion means something in common. Absorption into God would not necessarily imply having something in common with God. The prophetic consciousness sought the communion of thinking what the Lord was thinking, and of doing what the Lord was doing. "I love thy law." The law was not concerned with direct gaze at God. It aimed at setting forth the form of conduct dear to God.

It would seem that the truest way of being with God is to look at the objects of the divine purpose. Communion implies not absorption of persons in one another, but absorption in common tasks. Take the most intimate form of companionship the human race knows, that of marriage. How many marriages could endure long if they had for their ideal just mutual contemplation? Let the man be the expression of the highest masculine perfection and the woman the loveliest manifestation of feminine virtues.

Such objects in themselves are worthy of contemplation, but the direct gaze is not the path toward completest understanding and appreciation between husband and wife. That appreciation is an indefinable realization of values arising out of working together. So it must be with the human and the Divine. There is to-day much practical mysticism, by which I mean subtle illumination growing out of the actual attempt to know and do the will of God. Speaking again without disparagement, a great deal of what passes as mysticism seems to lack the redemptive note. In all the speech about losing himself in God the mystic reveals that it is himself he desires to be lost. He is seeking the vision of God as a thing in itself *for himself*. It is odd that such vision so often misses the redemptive element in the divine nature. The cross at the heart of God, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, the desire to fill up that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ, is harder to fit into the mystic experience of latter-day preaching than into the prophetic message. The prophet never could adjust himself to the evils of this present world. It is not conceivable that he would have been satisfied with an ineffable experience in the presence of evils from which men could be redeemed except as giving him new power to cope with those evils. Take such a query as that of Habakkuk as to the justice of

God in the presence of undeserved suffering by peoples. This question does not fit in well with a mystic vision of ineffability. If I were to hazard a guess as to what a prophetic mysticism to-day would be, I think I should have to keep the moral aspects in the first place—the gaze not just upon God as an end in himself, but upon the objects of God's concern; except, I must always repeat, as such gaze upon God as end in himself might, paradoxically enough, lead to possession of redemptive means in themselves.

As prophecy came to its loftiest heights the prophets asked as to how God felt about the world and as to his redemptive purpose toward the world. Prophetic mysticism would not rest until it had climbed highest peaks of the divine attainable, but having attained those peaks it would not direct all its gaze upward toward the skies, but would turn downward toward the plains where men live, or would by what Hocking calls the "alternation" of mysticism look now down and now up, and now up and now down. It would strive not only to see God, but to see the world as God sees it. If direct vision was sought, it would be for the sake of larger vision for men.

May I say in closing this lecture that there is enough in everyday experience to make the prophetic experience intelligible to us, at least enough to keep it from an unnatural strange-

ness. That experience centers around the attitude of will, just like the multitudinous deeds of daily life which control our thinking. Thoughts which are serious enough to affect our will-attitudes are sooner or later likely to affect also that realm which the psychologists call the subconscious or the unconscious. Poincaré, one of the ablest mathematicians of the last generation, used to say that in handling problems he first fixed the problem itself definitely in mind, then turned to it as often as he felt inclined, bringing it up now and again, and then for a season putting it to one side. Suddenly some day, often in the midst of the least promising contexts mathematically speaking, the solution would flash upon him. This entirely normal experience may give a clue to the processes of prophetic mysticism. The passivity, of which the conventional mystic says so much, is the relaxation which follows the tense deliberate spiritual effort, though the mind may be still in its own way slowly circling around its problem. The long brooding is what would be called by thinkers like Graham Wallas the "period of incubation" when the mind, like the organism which it is, is stirring in naturally organic ways. The sudden inspiration is the quick flowering out of the processes which have thus been moving. In one of his matchless parables Jesus spoke of the husbandman as allowing the seed to take care of itself

through a long growth—the seed springeth up, he knoweth not how. When, however, the time of harvest is come, *immediately* he putteth in the sickle. This immediate putting in of the sickle is characteristic of prophetic utterance. Broodings that the world knows not of break forth as trumpet calls. The prophet announces. He does not explain.

The prophet at his finest and best arrives at moral expertness. As I said at the outset, this expertness does not depend upon the possession of any special faculty, but upon the development of powers entirely human. The prophet reaches the stage where he is sure of his truth. He cannot tell just why, but he is certain as men become certain in any affairs having to do with mighty life concerns. God has spoken to him, because the message has that spiritual quality which can come from no source but God. Always the direct insight of the prophet appears to be the ground of his certainty. We have here the same mystery of expertness which we meet in any realm of extraordinary human attainment. The expert can seldom describe the secret of his own power. By long and absorbed practice he attains to the power just to do what seems to the untrained to be mysterious. In this sense there is no explaining "authority." The scientist comes to a discernment practically unerring, especially where skill is involved. With a sur-

geon, for example, the skill is wrought even into his fingertips. So with artistic insight. We do not wisely ask artists to tell why one picture, or sculpture, or cathedral is a masterpiece and another commonplace. Thus, finally, with moral seeing. The prophet arrived at the power to see —and he saw and spoke. In thus seeing and speaking he felt that he had seen the Lord and was speaking his truth. This moral insight, it seems to me, must be the touchstone of any mysticism claiming to be prophetic.

Mysticism is like radium—enormously powerful and incredibly beneficial for mankind, and excessively dangerous. The prophet with his keen awareness of moral values is the expert most capable of handling it.

IV

PROPHETS AND PRIESTS

I USE the word "priest" in this lecture in a general sense as referring to the official guardians of the church as an institution. The term as thus employed may seem improperly to include officials of the more administrative stamp, but it will be easy enough to make distinctions where they are necessary. The duty of the prophet which I next consider is that of keeping ecclesiastical institutionalism moral.

It is sometimes affirmed that the prophet is the foe of the institution. This may be true in a measure, but it is usually an exaggeration. In Hebrew prophecy the presence of the prophet presupposed some form of religious organization. If religion is to count as an effective force at all, it must be social, and being social requires some organization. We forget this in these days of emphasis on individuality in religion. We say glibly and tritely that man's religion is his own affair and is nobody else's business. Well, it is possible for us to admit the cogency of such assertion just because organized religious effort has through the ages got so much of religious spirit into the air we breathe. How many of

those who will have nothing to do with organized religion would ever know how to start to think of God if the church had not mapped out the path? Let any man who is "going it alone" in his religious life—if he is "going" at all—take to talking seriously about religion and he either utters platitude, or he falls into the paths traced by organized effort long before he appeared on this earthly scene. Social relations enter practically everything human, and they enter inevitably into religious activities. There is no use wasting time on this point. Whether such religious relations were good or bad men would enter into them. As for going it alone religiously, this is almost as if a man should say that he would go it alone in his thinking—communing only with himself. Which might be laudable enough, but his own inner cogitation, if it ever came into words at all, would have to take advantage of a social creation. Language is most certainly such a creation.

Granting, then, that men will act religiously in company with their fellows, consider how inevitably organization arises. Suppose we follow the suggestion, which seems to be precious with some enemies of organization, that in religious affairs groups should assemble spontaneously with no "machinery" at all. Suppose such a group to assemble, and to be so pleased with its assembling as to desire to assemble again. The

same groups cannot go on "spontaneously" assembling. They must determine on some plan, if that involves nothing more than setting a time and place for the next meeting. That usually means a committee, and by the time a group has appointed a committee it is well on the way toward formal organization. Now as to the service itself. I once read a charmingly naïve suggestion by a socialist as to church services in the new social order. The suggestion was that groups interested should meet together and listen to one or more of the older men, those most deeply schooled in the experiences of life. Would there not be something of a problem at the outset as to the choice of speakers? If the speaking were wholly voluntary, it would soon kill the meetings. In any event the people would soon be expressing, at least by signs, audible or silent, that they preferred some speakers rather than others, and in a socialistic community the will of the majority would presumably have to be the decisive factor in determining who should speak. It would presently become apparent that in religion as elsewhere the speakers who had studied most about their themes would be most acceptable and profitable. Finally the subdivision of labor in such an order of society would work toward setting aside particular persons for religious tasks.

There is no need of going further with this.

Anything that is human at all arrives at institutionalism in the long run, if not in the short run. The prophets would have been foolish indeed if they had aimed at demolishing institutions. Their intent was to fasten the institutions to moral ideals and to prevent their slipping into the evils which we shall mention. May I say in passing that it is not necessary to assume that the agents and trustees of institutions are selfish and wicked men. That evil men do make use of institutions is beyond question, but, evils aside, there are some inherent tendencies in institutional activity which justify all the prophet's strenuousness.

It is taxing to keep our balance here. The relation of prophets to institutions is a problem about which no rules can be laid down. On the one hand are the necessity and inevitability of institutions if life is to go on at all. Some of the characteristics of institutions that seem dubious are at bottom advantages, and some of the advantages tend to harm. For example, it is common to denounce the slowness of institutions as compared with the speed with which an individual might move alone. It has been said that the speed of an institution, like the speed of a fleet of ships, is set by the slowest vessels. The problem is not so simply mechanical as that, however. We are dealing more with an organism than a mechanism when we are at work with

institutions. It would not be possible for the fastest ship to quicken the slowest ship, but when men are traveling together in institutions that very miracle is accomplished. The slowest souls are quickened by the contagious speed of the fastest, or of the faster. There is a mutual and reciprocal stimulation which enlightens minds, stirs emotions, and releases fresh forces of will. Likewise the fastest, in his purposeful attempt to help the slowest, finds that the attempt to share his own power gives him more power.

Over against this has to be set the sheer mass of human inertia. The forces of habit, of adhesion to an old method, of aversion to change, of desire to let well enough alone lay strong hold on hosts of human beings, while the evils of officialism constitute a heavy problem by themselves. To meet all this the prophet is, as human societies go, the effective instrument. To preserve the institution we must have the man who attacks the institution, but he best comes from within the institution itself—and may be, in a word, a product of the institution's own self-preservative forces. Jesus, of course, expressed the historic truth when he spoke of Jerusalem as stoning the prophets, but Jerusalem did not stone all the prophets, and did not stone any of the more important prophets till after they had got their message into the public mind. Stoning is a democratic punishment. Anybody who has

traveled in Palestine knows that stones are everywhere. All one has to do in stoning is to pick up a stone and throw it. Anybody can take a hand in stoning a prophet, but not many are likely to do so unless the voice of the prophet has been widely heard. When all is said, a wonderful feature of Israel's life was the extent to which the prophet was given a chance to speak. No one of the greater Old Testament prophets seems to have met a violent death, terrible as were the sufferings of a Jeremiah, for illustration. If we are to single out an element in what we vaguely call the "genius" of Israel which has redounded to the glory of all men, we may pay honor to Israel's remarkable tolerance of the prophets. As far as the Old Testament is concerned the contribution which the prophets made is an imperishable gift to the glory of human moral attainment. Something of the credit for the contribution must be given to that quality in the life of Israel which made it possible for the prophets to get a hearing.

In all their speech the prophets took Israel and its types of institutional life for granted. They must not be pictured as Ishmaels, with their hands against every institution and the hands of every institution against them. Of not one of them can it be said that he was not devoted to Israel, and, as we have remarked, Israel always allowed enough of freedom to make the

utterance of the prophet possible. Looking at our modern times, we may say that a church without an opportunity for the prophet is hardly a church at all, as lacking the organ for the conservation and revivifying of that moral spirit which is all-essential to Christianity. On the other hand, the prophet who cuts loose from the church and seeks to keep alive its moral fervor by force exerted from the outside is shorn of most of his strength at once. He is forthwith reckoned as on the outside, and sooner or later is likely to reckon himself as on the outside. Then the background of religious thinking bulks less and less with him and the balance and precision of his moral energy may vanish.

Advancing from these somewhat general propositions, we note first that conflict, or at least tension, is likely to arise in any religion aiming at high morality, between prophets and priests as to the mysteries of the religion. We do not recognize as numerous signs of such friction in Israel as in some other religions, but we do realize that from an early period the prophets perceived the mystery of Israel's religion to be in its moral and spiritual principles. The mystery resided not in magic nor in any features producing fearsome awe. I recur again to this because of the somewhat wide acceptance of Otto's suggestion that the essence of religion is in the awe-producing, though I must insist that

I am not alleging that Otto is himself necessarily in sympathy with the extremes to which his thesis has been pushed. Now, in a religion which lays stress on mystery of the awe-producing type we can easily see the chance for the artificial. Indeed, we can ourselves recall instances in which the manipulations of lights and shadows, of tones and gestures, have been calculated to heighten the feeling of mystery, or perhaps, better say, of reverence. There are occasions when this is altogether proper. The instinct for the æsthetic and the dramatic can fittingly be employed to strengthen religious impressions. We can see, nevertheless, how all such procedure can lend itself to the creation and preservation of a priestly caste, or rather craft, for the guarding of what may almost be called trade secrets. The priest in Israel who knew how to cultivate and enhance dread, or awe, in the worshipers was very much of a priest indeed. The wonder is that there is so little space given to this sort of thing in the Scriptures—hardly any of it in the age of the greater prophets. In the Davidic era we have instances like the death of Uzzah, but the prophets never make much of these dread-causing incidents. The priests did not get much chance to exploit the dread-causing with the prophets always at hand to push the emphasis back on the moral when it showed any sign of slipping. The prophets did not shrink from

threatening Israel with the most dreadful woes, but they did not threaten for the sake of increasing the dread for a Deity, but for the sake of increasing reverence for moral law. They saw a close connection between the breaking of moral commandments and the direful events in the world of daily existence.

We must never forget that the prophet, with all his roughness of speech and of deed, was a personality of complete reverence, but his reverence was for the moral law. The attitude appeared most unmistakably at the very instants when the ordinary man was taking that law as ordinary indeed. To the prophets there was no profounder mystery than the law which others so readily regarded as commonplace. If we wish an analogy, we can find it in the attitude of the man of the street to a physical mystery like that of light as contrasted with the attitude of the scientist. The man in the street takes light as a matter of course. He seldom thinks of it as a mystery at all. Let, now, some experiment separate the light into its strands of colors, or let some vast phenomenon like an eclipse of the sun occur, and the most ordinary intelligence stands in awe before the mystery. In the ancient times priests would have thriven on their knowledge of just such mysteries as these. To the man of science, however, the perpetual mystery is the light of common day, with its unfailing con-

stancy. He can never cease to wonder at this marvel. So with the prophets. The law which men were to observe day by day was a constant reminder of the nature of the Lord, and was the mystery above all others to be revered and honored.

The priest of Israel had to do with the conservation of the sacred practices, and the sacred ritual. Here we of to-day are likely to think of something like the magic which was so predominant a feature of religious practice in the first history even of Israel. The prophets of Israel set themselves early to get the emphasis off magic. I have already remarked that one of the arresting peculiarities of Israel's career was the quickness with which the religion worked free from magic, and this was due to a prophetic quality which seems almost to have been innate with the nation itself. Still we have not exhausted the function of the prophet in this sphere when we have conceived of him as the foe of magic. A carefully preserved ritual has virtues beyond any which magic could ever confer. The ritual may be beautiful in itself, and may legitimately minister to a craving for beauty. Or it may give the worshiper an awareness of connection with other worshipers the world around, and of continuity with past generations. It can and does happen, for example, that a nation which makes the most use of symbol is at

the same time the most democratic. Probably Great Britain is the most democratic nation on earth to-day, and we are all aware of the function of symbol in the history of Great Britain. Paradoxically enough, the more democratic the empire of Britain becomes, the more secure is kingship in the empire. For the throne is a factor which appeals to all. It is an object to which all the nations of the commonwealth can pay honor, and it links the citizens of to-day with the citizens of centuries ago. The kingship is a symbol of the world-wide reach of the empire and of its inclusion of the millions who have honored the king in the past. If it be pointed out that the king has no definite legislative, or executive, or judicial authority, the reply, baffling as it may sound, is that nations are not chiefly ruled or swayed by these specifically governmental functions. The framers of constitutions are indeed always eager to tell us that the three spheres of activity just mentioned are all-inclusive. These activities may include all except the imponderables—imponderables which with Great Britain hold the empire together where armies and navies would avail not. The power is that of a vital symbolism, one which has a living sentiment back of it. Now, if it should come to pass that any group of men should succeed in so utilizing the symbol as to violate human rights, attack even upon the

symbol would be in order. If it were so used as to create and perpetuate inequalities between men, or to thwart the legitimate human ambitions of men, or to stifle the individual's legitimate self-expression, even ridicule would be called for. As long, however, as the institution stands as a reminder of the corporate life of scores upon scores of millions, and of the continuous history of the constituent groups, and as long as the welfare of the millions is kept in mind, the symbol will be honored. The less it is and becomes in itself the more it is likely to be revered. On this same general ground it is possible to argue for unchanging ritual and for the carefulness with which priests should guard that ritual. Nevertheless, there is nothing sacred from the prophet's attack if ritual or anything symbolic begins to assume prerogatives on its own account, or to stand in the way of the benefit of the worshipers. One possible harm to the worshipers is just the spiritual indolence which after a while may look only to the symbol itself. Then the gate is at least ajar toward something resembling magic.

We have always been told that one of the mighty contributions of the prophets to the uplift of religion was the age-long battle against idolatry. Something can be urged, abstractly, for idolatry. The priest could easily say—in truth, has always said—that an idol is nothing

in itself, that it is a symbol of divinity merely, that it makes the divine real by giving it a local habitation and a definite form which the worshiper can see and handle. The inevitable tendency in idolatry is straight downhill. To begin with, idol-making by its definiteness of form slows down, or stops, religious thinking. When we have actually made something, it is hard thereafter to change it. One cannot very well make over an idol. He can make a different idol, but then he must meet the question as to whether the idol is true to the standard and orthodox requirements. The idol means fixity, and stops progress. After that the tendency is toward degradation. The emphasis on what can be seen and handled works away from the moral and spiritual and directly toward the material and sensual. How acute this danger was in Israel appears from the fact that the greater prophets were always fighting idolatry. Remember, idols were worshiped in Israel through long periods. The earlier prophets like Elijah and Elisha do not seem to have been impressed with the dangers of such worship. They may have taken it as a matter of course or they may have regarded it leniently for its symbolism. The later prophets, however, wage unrelenting warfare. The ferocity of the warfare shows the reality of the peril. The prophets talked about the evils which they actually confronted. They had to fight against

all the human degradation which came with idol-veneration—the licentiousness and cruelty which crept in with the worship and the stagnation which followed the manufacture of idols.

There is no danger of idolatry in the sense of worshiping material idols to-day, but some evils substantially similar to idolatry are still with us. The urgency for a finally fixed credal statement is one. We all know well enough that there are mental creations of an instrumental order which we can adore without physically bowing down before them. We can take them as ends in themselves to the damage of growing religious feeling.

In speaking of creeds we must be on our guard not to disparage the intellectual element in religious experience. For some years past—due in considerable degree to the vogue of pragmatism—there has been in religious circles a veritable epidemic of anti-intellectualism. Men have confused creeds with all forms of intellectual statement and in rebelling against creeds and the arid and mechanical interpretations of them, have seemed to rebel against the use of the intellect in religion. It requires, of course, only a glance to see the fallacy of this. In an age when progress in almost every other realm of human experience comes through the severest types of severe thinking the very ones who cry out against creeds will in the next breath insist that the spokesmen

for religion train themselves intellectually for their tasks as never before.

The protest against creeds, though, and the emphasis on thinking belong together with less of contradiction than would have seemed possible. The prophetic protest against creeds is against their stopping, or slowing down thinking. A religious group that is genuinely and fundamentally alive is alive in its thinking. The danger about a creed is that it comes to be a finality. It is a finished construction, almost as tangible as an idol is tangible. It is here to be seen and touched. We can put it where we please and it will stay there, all of which is gratifying enough to the mind that wants nothing done, but ruinous to religious progress. It was surely a stroke of divine genius that left the inner Holy of holies in the old Jewish Temple virtually empty. That emptiness was infinitely better than an attempt to define. The prophet stands for the human interest, for increasing fullness of life. He is not always a thinker himself, but he knows when his thinking feels cramped, and he protests against anything that cramps him.

Some of the creeds are marvels of spiritual insight and intellectual construction. They are as distinctive of their era as the Gothic cathedrals. They ought to be regarded as if they were as imperishable as the Gothic cathedrals. Only, we would well remind ourselves that the

uses of the Gothic cathedral are not now the same as when the cathedrals were built. They are certainly less practical than in the Middle Ages, but their real majesty becomes mightier with the passage of the years. Likewise the creeds were in the beginning attempts to make exact statement for immediately practical purposes. Nobody then doubted their instrumental value. With the flight of time, however, they minister in a different fashion, perhaps with a higher serviceableness. They have revealed elements of beauty in themselves which their formulators hardly suspected. They are seen now not merely as utterances about God, but as the utterances of various ages about those ages themselves. They are shadowings forth of truth, shadowings of lofty significance and beauty, but not exact and final definitions. Shadows, however, may be of vast importance.

Credal statement plays less and less part in the life of the church so far as it concerns standards of belief to which men must definitely subscribe. If they are used as authoritative standards, the function of the prophet is in order, which is not necessarily argument, but attack in the name of the high human interests imperiled. The scornful picture of the idol-maker, as set before us by the prophet, comes to mind. The builder carves out a form of wood, saves what is left over and with that kindles a fire to

make his pot boil. Of course there is a long, long distance between idol-shaping and creed-fashioning, but sarcasm is equally pertinent when a creed-maker takes his phrases as full descriptions of Deity. The inadequacy of an idol to represent God, or even an alleged god, is apparent on a little consideration; the inadequacy of a creed to make us know God ought to be equally apparent—I mean, now, when the creed is taken as anything more than hint or adumbration. The sarcasm of the prophet about the wood and the shavings is almost as pertinent with the creed, taken literally, as with the idol. The spectacle of an ecclesiastical council formulating a statement intended as a final utterance about God lends itself quite as readily to ridicule as the spectacle of the idol-carpenter busy with his axes and knives. The more nearly final the statement proposes to be the more dreadful the havoc possible.

The danger that the Protestant religion will ever become the worship of a book is fast passing, but Protestantism will always need the prophetic attitude toward the Scriptures. Ages before critical methods of the study of sacred writings were even dreamed of, the prophets were proceeding with the freest imaginable handling of what at least corresponded to Scriptures, namely, the statements about Israel's history and laws which were regarded as beyond all

challenge. Against the whole system of ritual which Israel looked upon as dating from the Mosaic days, the prophet Amos declared that there had been no such elaborate ritual in the wilderness wanderings. The prophets dared to rank the laws subordinate to an inner spirit of righteousness. They dared challenge the conduct of national heroes, as did Hosea the bloodthirstiness of Jehu. The boldness of this course becomes impressive when we recall that Jehu had been advised by the prophet Elisha, whom Israel held in high reverence. It was even bolder to attack leaders of the past, after they had been enshrined in the nation's hall of fame, than to attack kings to their faces as did Nathan David, and Elijah Ahab.

When we think of a prophetic ministry for our own time in its relation to the Scriptures, we must not forget that the church was the creator of the Scriptures, and that the church has always been the interpreter of the Scriptures. Of course, the central fact in Christianity is Christ, but the records of the Christ-life have been determined for us by the church. There was a church before there were New Testament documents. At the beginning of the life of the church there were documents in plenty—all varieties of documents. Less by a deliberate process of choice, perhaps, than by use of the documents themselves the church determined what the New

Testament should be. The church was a fellowship. The essential requirement was that the document should promote fellowship of the members with one another and with the living Christ.

This is by no means a sanction for the theory that the church itself created the facts, so to speak, which it announced as actual history. We have heard much about Christ as a myth created in outright fashion. A touch of prophetic discernment of the forces that play in real life ought to be a corrective against acceptance of such artificiality. The prophet has always been blessed with a keen instinct for the real, in spite of his absorption with the ideal. Theories which make illusions more powerful than fact need to encounter now and again the prophet's moral health, his alertness for the fundamentally actual.

Nevertheless, after this has been said, the prophet would insist that the revelation of the Revelation increases with growing life. Many events in this existence of ours take place once for all, and yet continue increasing indefinitely in power and significance. Perhaps it might be permissible to say that nothing happens once for all. The seas and the skies and the mountains have indeed been almost unalterably before the gaze of man from the beginning. The sum of the world's poetry, as far as nature supplies the theme, has been made up of utterances about

factors of existence which men have been gazing at from the dawn of history. We are thrilled to-day with that old line, dating from near the beginning of English poetry, which tells us that "Sumer is icumen in." The verse meant more, from one angle, to its author in the cold northern latitudes than it can mean to present-day readers. For it hailed spring as a relief from the darkness and chilliness and cheerlessness which the advance of science has in large measure shown us how to overcome. Yet the words are everlastingly intelligible to dwellers in northern climes, and with the increase of the appreciation of beauty mean more than ever before. So with the profounder phases of human experience—the facts of birth and death, pain and joy, defeat and victory. Likewise with a transcendent fact like the career of Christ, the career is there once for all, crowded into a few short months. Yet the increase of knowledge never exhausts its significance. The debate as to whether Christ lived at all or not is futile to one with a sound feeling for reality. The debate as to the finality of Christ, when we approach Christ in living fashion, is likewise barren. There is a debate going on among a somewhat limited number of physicists as to what might be called the absoluteness of light, the speed of light being taken as an absolute velocity. The debate is fruitful for some types of physical research, not barren

by any means. The absolute velocity of light is one of the foundation stones of the modern theory of relativity. When, however, the question takes the form of asking whether there can be anything "beyond light," or, in common phrase, "better than light," we are not on the path to anything especially productive, particularly in view of the impossibility of any one man's now mastering what we know, and can know, about light. The question as to the finality of Christ is fruitful enough when the claims of Christ are put over against the claims of actual non-Christian religions, but when it takes the form of asking as to an abstract finality it gets away from that fullness of content which is the glory of Christianity. It is like the question as to whether there can be anything better than personality. Questions like this are forever possible, and, abstractly considered, forever insoluble.

I mention all this because of the tendency of religious minds to raise all manner of puzzles about the Christian Scriptures, especially to debate problems like infallibility and inerrancy. The only safety is in the prophetic mood which arises out of a religious life-instinct, which when even an object sacred in popular regard stands in the way of genuine moral interests uses any weapon, even ridicule, for the attack. In a later lecture there will be opportunity for a word on

the perils of prophecy, perils which are thoroughly real, but prophecy must arrest attention at times by almost desperate expedients. One harm that literalists always are bringing upon religion is exposure to ridicule. The prophet is not endowed with what we should ordinarily call humor in its lighter forms, but he is rich enough in grim scorn and irony. The trouble with literalism—I am speaking now of scriptural handlings—is that it is essentially ridiculous. If so large an element of tragedy were not involved, nothing funnier could be conceived than an anthology of literal interpretations of sacred writers, interpretations too that have been seriously held fast through long periods in the history of religion. Bergson once, professedly in a mood of half-seriousness, wrote an essay on the philosophy of humor, in which he declared that humor arrives with the spectacle of something passing out of, or over from, the living into the mechanical. A man sprawls into a ridiculous fall, the easy, spontaneous play of a living organism being abruptly transformed into the inertness of the mechanical. Bergson never intended this as anything more than a playful suggestion, but the suggestion is fertile indeed for our present purpose. The absurd and ridiculous enter into religion at the instant when the living, spontaneous organic activity yields to the mechanical. The Scriptures come out of

life, they work back into life; their chief concern is with living issues. Estop the free play of life and the grotesque appears, grotesque which merits the prophet's scorn.

Now, the attitude of the priest in the presence of what he regards sacred is one of horrified outcry. There are always those who will have it that the priest's horror is assumed, that he himself is close enough to much that passes as sacred to see through its pretensions. This charge may be true enough as concerns ancient augurs and workers of ecclesiastical magic, but there is not wide basis for it to-day. We may as well admit that the horror is genuine, with priests and those led by priests. One of the earthly mysteries is the pain that has to be inflicted upon many good people in order to push good causes ahead. There were sincere idol-worshipers in the early days of Israel. Exodus tells us of the golden calf made by the people of Israel while Moses and Joshua were upon the mount. We are not to believe that all the worshipers of the calf—or most of them—were bad. From the narrative we can easily see that, for the moment at least, it appeared to Israel that Moses was giving the people nothing tangible to worship. According to the story, the Israelites were willing to strip themselves of their jewels to pay for something that seemed real as an object of worship. Calf-worship lasted in Israel long after the entrance

into Canaan. It was sacred to many good souls, but it could not escape the scorn of the prophets nevertheless. A wise adage tells us that we cannot forever respect that which is not inherently respectable. We cannot forever hold as sacred that which has ceased to be sacred. It is at least part of the prophetic function to tell us when the sacredness of some religious conceptions has vanished, or has shifted to a different quarter.

I approach with misgiving a problem much alive in some ecclesiastical circles to-day, namely, that of the sacraments, or more particularly the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. My misgiving comes out of the realization that to many devout worshipers this sacrament is the chief essential of the Christian religion. To be sure, the interpretation of the service of communion ranges all the way from that of outright miracle, both physical and spiritual, to that of simple memorial. Some extreme utterances now and again appear in unexpected quarters. I have within two years heard a most distinguished theologian, a European, declare that in his judgment the sacrament is so miraculously divine that if one should partake of it unwittingly, or against his real desire, he would be made better. This theologian was avowedly not thinking of material but of spiritual miracle, but he was opening the way to acceptance of the position that a man could be made better in his spiritual

life whether he desired to be or not. We should normally suppose that the table of the Lord should be approached by those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Anything which lifts the sacrament of communion away from fundamentally human and moral considerations deserves the prophetic fire. It is altogether possible to make the doctrine of the Lord's Supper the channel through which paganism enters. Indeed, an occasional scholar, taking the words of sacramental ritual mechanically and literally, has declared that the determining factor in the early spread of Christianity was Paul's adaptation of Christian symbol to sentiment in the Roman world by making the Supper appear to be the consumption of the flesh and blood of God after the manner of the age-old heathen conceptions. This particular judgment shows the extreme to which scholarship of this type can go. The more imminent peril is just from the emphasis on the miraculous in itself. If we could more and more think of the Supper of our Lord in vital, human fashion, we might escape most of the peril. While we cannot make the historical Supper itself control all our thinking as to the sacrament to-day, we can at least hold to the Supper as a guide to reflection. The central feature of the last meeting of Jesus himself with his disciples was a double-giving of a spiritual order involving Jesus and his disciples.

Jesus was baring his inmost life to his disciples as he had never done before. The Supper itself and the scene in Gethsemane which immediately followed it reveal to us profounder depths in the experience of Jesus than anything else in the New Testament. Jesus was not only giving more, but seeking for more from his disciples upon that occasion than ever before. All through the evening of the Last Supper the craving of Jesus for something which his disciples alone could give him was most marked. Again, the Supper was not only a communion in itself for the sake of the deep gratification and joy of communion, but it was a preparation for a moral struggle, or, to use a word popular to-day, for a moral "adventure." The highly moral and spiritual features of the historic Last Supper are manifest at a glance. How anyone can think of the sacrament as the occasion for the working of a miracle—unless the miracle has to do with the exaltation of surpassingly spiritual qualities —at least how anyone could think of material miracle with the transcendently moral quality of the historical Supper before him is itself a marvel of no small degree. The communion, conceived of in terms suggested by the historic event, is a mutual giving of Divine and human. A Supper re-enforces life. The communion is intended thus to be a spiritual re-enforcement. We know by the testimony of believers whom we

cannot doubt that it does thus re-enforce spiritual power. We know from indubitable testimony that it deepens the springs of moral life.

We have here to keep in mind a consideration similar to that necessary in our attitude to mysticism. We must emphasize the moral impulse to the sacrament and the moral result which follows, what the devotion to the sacrament comes from and what it leads to. With the prophet standing ready to break out upon us if we slip toward the wrong emphasis in our attitude toward the sacrament of communion, let us admit, or declare openly, that there are those who do not think of the Lord's Supper as instrumental at all, in the ordinary use of the term. They do not come to the table for the sake of moral re-enforcement. It is with them the other way around. They give themselves to moral living and service for the sake of being worthy of the communion, finding in the communion itself an experience of the conviction of the reality of God which is the supreme value on its own account. They insist that this is moral communion, or that the communion is prepared for by moral endeavor. They seek to get into relations of love and charity with their neighbors, that they may draw near with faith to take the holy sacrament to their comfort, the comfort not of spiritual complacency but of a satisfaction that passeth understanding, like the satisfaction

with which the lover of nature contemplates a glorious landscape, or with which an artist gazes upon a superlative masterpiece. God, such worshipers say, is the end in himself. The best way to make men think of one another as ends in themselves also is to set before them this absorbed vision of God.

Far be it from me to disparage this noble conception. Too much has come out of it for the religious uplift of men to justify any hasty criticism, and careful criticism finds need of the utmost circumspection. We have been told by a discriminating scholar that the one man who did the most for modern civilization, Saint Francis of Assisi, was the one man of centuries who cared least for civilization as such. This man got certain stupendous spiritual conceptions into the mind of mankind, and the blessings of civilization almost inevitably followed with the seizure of the higher values. I suppose, likewise, it might be said that the leader who helps men most is the one who sees God, making his proper study that of God rather than man. Here questions begin to swarm upon us. How can a man see God without seeing man as God sees him? How can a man see his fellows as God sees them without definitely looking at them? If mankind means so much to God that he bears the cross for mankind, how can mankind fail to be a focusing point in the worshiper's thought of God? In

a word, we may recognize the truth in the mystic's emphasis on the vision of God as an end in itself, but we would better insist that this truth be preached only with the fiercest and most uncompromising prophet of the human values within sound of the voice of the preacher.

We come now to a word about the priest as the official and his contacts, or conflicts, with prophets, though all ecclesiastical officials are not all priests. We admit the presence of evil-minded ecclesiastical officials in all ages of the history of the church, but we do not find in them the chief peril against which the prophet has to wage war. The dangers which ecclesiastical officialism brings to the church come out of deep-seated peculiarities in human nature itself, and at times out of qualities in themselves fine. This makes the task of the prophet strenuous indeed. He cannot always stop to remind his hearers that the motives of the officials may be unselfish. He cannot always stop to ask as to motives.

The "official mind" is a phenomenon quite distinctive and yet it is intelligible enough, without especial recourse to suppositions of self-seeking. The official naturally takes himself as a trustee of an organization. One difficulty is that he is in position to see further into the practical consequences of listening to the prophet than can the prophet himself. An organization which has virtually become an organism possesses parts

most delicately interrelated. Consequences of touching the organism here, reach yonder, to a point quite removed from anything the prophet has in his view. Some of this the official sees at once and fears, and he fears more the effects which he cannot see. Again, the adoption of the recommendation of the prophet may introduce evils quite as dangerous as those against which he is fighting. It is most curious to note how the heeding of the call to ideals will at times actually work out.

This past summer I happened to be talking with a churchman of England who was anxious to see the Church of England made more democratic. Speaking of bishops he declared it to be a denial of fundamental democratic principles to consent to the appointment of bishops rather than to insist upon their election. Nothing more opposed to democracy could be imagined, he avowed. Yet of his own accord he went on to remark that the difficulty in bringing about the change from appointment to election is the likelihood that the English Church is now securing better bishops by appointment than she could find by election. On this particular issue I am not qualified to speak, but I do see in the remark of my friend an illustration of the extent to which one good result has to be sacrificed to another in the carrying out of the prophet's behests. Moreover, this is a type of consideration

of which we cannot expect the prophet to take account. No matter what we expect, he will not trouble himself about our expectations.

Again, the official is charged with the duty of keeping the organism actually living and moving now. We have, all of us, plenty to say about the dependence of the church on money income and about the apprehensiveness of officials lest the income decrease. Here, again, it will not do to speak as if officials were chiefly concerned with the maintenance of their own position and emoluments. They see benevolent enterprises of all types now in operation, and they feel it an imperative duty to keep them running. I have known the decrease of missionary funds to mean that orphans in the Orient and in war-torn Europe had to be turned loose to shift for themselves in a harrowing search for food, that schools had to close, that hospitals had to do without medicines and instruments. The church is a fellowship rather than an organization, indeed, but the more truly it is a fellowship the more urgent the duty of moral burden-bearing, involving the giving of money. We live in a world in which motives are indeed mixed, and in which the good and bad in men and in forces are mixed. If money ceases to come in to the treasury because of a prophet's denunciations, criticism falls upon the head of the officials for the shrinkage—criticism, interestingly enough,

often voiced by the prophet himself. Of course the prophet informs us that if we will heed his voice, the response in money will be beyond all precedent. If that is true, the prophet is seldom adequately heeded, at least till long after he is still, for the first effect of prophecy is likely to be a diminution of material resources.

In spite of all this, however, in spite of actual human suffering, we must have the prophet and we must take him as he is. The prophet is speaking with the eternal values in mind, and the official speaks with the consciousness of a "now" that is eternal in the wrong fashion. The perennial obstacle to improved moral conditions is that "now" is never the opportune moment to make a change. Every advance made in the Old Testament times, and in every time since, has had to meet the charge that it was inopportune. In a way every worthy change is inopportune. The wrongdoers against whom the prophets proclaimed could have said truthfully that they were the inheritors of conditions they did not create, that responsibilities had been incurred which they must meet. It is not because officials are dishonest and self-seeking that we need the zeal of the prophet. It is because they are so often honest and unselfish. A system has to be changed, and that means an aroused public opinion which will disregard the protests of honest defenders of the system. It is to the

credit of officials that as soon as change is inevitable they discover ways of making practical adjustment beyond anything a prophet could suggest, and that after the adjustment has been made they work loyally under it.

Again, we must never minimize the perils of organization. Some social thinkers have told us that as soon as an organization gets to running smoothly it should be broken up. This does not apply to banks or post offices, but to groups concerned with the advancement of moral issues. For a smooth-running organization comes at last to seem almost a fixity in the established order of nature. It appears to stand on its own account and in its own right and worth. Organizations have facility in so adjusting themselves to a system of working forces as to appear almost alive in their apparently spontaneous give-and-take with an environment. Let any sort of idea assume shape in mechanical expression and it seems to move along, if it is successful at all, not only by a logic of its own, but by a spirit of its own. This is even true in the writing of a book, or the development of a theory. There is an inherent almost-creative force about an organized religious conception. The trouble is that, alive though it appears, it becomes exacting in its own demands. Its logic develops too impersonally. Yet there is enough of vitality about it, and so many human associations cluster round it, that

it mightily resists substantial change. Hence the reason—and considerable reason at that—that organization as such should after a time be broken up.

I have said that the church ought to be regarded more as a fellowship than as an organization, yet to make it a true fellowship may create the most imperious demand for the prophet. The drunkards of Ephraim and the kine of Bashan were in a close fellowship. In the early days of the church Paul had to denounce wrong practices of fellowship. The religious group can serve marvelously in ministering to the social instincts of its members, but there is an immense abyss between the ideal of a church and that of a club, an abyss which in practice too many churches get across. From whatever angle, then, we regard the religious group, we discern the imperative necessity of making place for the prophet who abhors organization and who even has not much hankering after fellowship. He is the only human agent who can keep the group in the safe path.

At the risk of perhaps getting too far into detail I mention one or two points of current interest in ecclesiastical circles which have bearing on the function of the prophet. We hear much to-day about episcopacy, especially for its significance in movements toward church union. I think we could get on quite comfortably in

agreement on some instrument of centralized power if we did not try to locate the sacredness of such power in the wrong place. The sacredness of any aspect of the organization or procedure of the church is in the sacredness of the result produced. That sacredness reveals itself in the human effects. Argument to-day for the divine origin of the church gets us but a little distance. The church may cite all the credentials imaginable, of the kind commonly supposed divine, but the credentials will have little conviction-producing effect apart from divine consequences in human lives. A church claiming for itself divine sanction can only make good that claim by showing that it has helped men to realize their own divinity and to move toward larger divinity. What is true of the church as a whole is true also of any office or agency of the church. Laying on of hands in ordination is an impressive service, but the sacredness consists only in its moral inspiration.

Now, episcopacy is merely an instrument for securing the advantages of centralized effort. If there had been no instrument for gathering up the separate forces of the church and of massing them for attack on evil, the church as such would never have got a start. Even if the chief aim of the church is to develop the largest life of the individuals composing it, that aim becomes an achieved reality only as the various currents of

life coursing throughout the organism are at least measurably brought to a unified effort. The episcopacy could not have survived through the ages if it had not served in some such fashion. It is a mistake to speak of episcopacy as one of those survivals which linger along as anachronisms. Such survivals occur off to one side or the other of the main historic channels, where nobody is enough concerned to put an end to their surviving. Episcopacy has been out in the main highway, or at the center of the stage, administratively speaking, from the beginning. Of course, now, I am using the term "episcopacy" to cover all forms of centralized activity, whether the agents of the activities have called themselves bishops or not. The agents may not have born any title.

All this can, I think, be justly claimed for episcopacy. Now, it is peculiar to human beings that in conceiving of an object as sacred they seek the sacredness somewhere else than in the moral serviceableness of the object. Against this making an office sacred in itself the prophet is in order. The conception of sacredness in episcopacy itself lends itself to scornful ridicule, to the pain of hosts of good people, but the ridicule, or at least the criticism, is in order.

The second problem of current interest is that of church union. All Christians to-day deplore the impression produced by the apparently rival

divisions of Christianity. I say "apparently rival" because, in fact, the rivalry is not what it seems to be. The churches are inheritors of a condition produced in other days, and are for the most part succeeding notably in manifesting a spirit of unity through a multitudinously diverse set of organs. Still, the handicap is real and serious when we are thinking of a witness to the world of the fundamental oneness of Christianity.

Here, again, we have to hold to the moral requisites, to the results in the lives of human beings. The justification of the church is its giving the opportunities to individuals to make the most of themselves in relation to God and man. This involves at once the preservation of diversity. There must be room for the full activity of small groups. In educational tasks we have come to recognize that while mass effects are possible to-day as never before, there is also more room now than ever before for the small group—for small colleges, for small groups in those colleges. Wonders are indeed being achieved in education of the masses of democracy; for example, the safety of nations from plagues to-day, plagues which centuries ago emptied the cities and stripped the countryside, is due to the fact that the ordinary man of the street knows enough about clean and pure water and milk, and enough about disease-carriers, to

help public health officials hold disease at a distance. Nevertheless, the knowledge which can be thus communicated to the public was not learned and cannot be learned by mass methods.

In the formation of states wise political students have told us that small units serve society by supplying fields in which social experiments can be carried through on the small scale before they are tested out on the large scale. More than that, in the religious realm some circles will always be small. The advance through prophetic utterance comes not by large adoption of the prophet's message at the outset. With almost every prophet the work of propagating the idea is the function of a small group who take it on themselves to stand by and repeat and expound the prophetic utterance.

Unity of ecclesiastical groups is an urgent need of the day and hour, and yet this unity must needs be watched with extreme care. As long as a small denomination, free to speak and act on its own account, is responsible to nothing outside itself it may render vast service to Christianity. If, however, that denomination is under the control of a centralized power in the slightest degree, a crisis may arise which will leave nothing but surrender or secession as alternatives, and that too where profound spiritual issues are at stake. The plight of the Quakers was bad enough during the World War, but suppose the

Quakers had been part of a church which could at least exert influence through the organs of a unified mass. Does any intelligent person doubt that the pressure for a warlike stand would have been put on the Quakers to the last ounce?

No; the essential problem in union is to secure union on such terms as to make the One Church not less, but more moral than before. It will never be possible to annihilate prophecy, but it is disastrously possible to create an organization which by its size and unity will make prophecy count for less and less. There is no tyrant so stupid or wicked as a huge democracy once it is wrongly set in likemindedness.

V

PROPHETS AND KINGS

From their first appearance in the history of Israel prophets took part in determining the public life of Israel. They had messages for the kings for what we might call the domestic policies of Israel, and also for the relations of Israel to the other nations of the earth. The prophets dared rebuke kings for their individual conduct as Nathan rebuked David for the murder of Uriah, and Elijah rebuked Ahab for the outrage upon Naboth. Elisha was an adviser to Jehu in Jehu's bloody onslaughts upon the house of Ahab. In the later, nobler days Amos poured out his stern wrath upon the conduct of the rulers of nations in their inhumanities both in war and peace. Isaiah advised Hezekiah in his dealings with Damascus and the Assyrians. Jeremiah was so outspoken in his utterances about the futility of standing out against Babylon as to call down upon himself the suspicion of treason, or at least of what we to-day should call defeatism. Habakkuk's deep-searching question as to the justice of God had to do chiefly with the divine dealing with nations. Later came the splendid words of Jonah about the

right attitude toward even Israel's enemies, and the glories of the universal outlook of the Second Isaiah. About the fact of the historic relations of prophets and kings there can be no question.

There is, however, question in our later times as to whether prophets should speak on the large social and national themes which we have been accustomed to associate with the council chambers of statesmen. We are reminded that in Israel state and church were virtually one. There were indeed prophets and there were kings, but fundamentally Israel conceived of herself as so peculiarly chosen of the Lord that there was no room for what we to-day should call secularism. Everything in social and national policy had a divine significance. Nowadays, we are told, we have to take account of vast realms of activity which we have to pronounce secular. There ought never to have been drawn that line between secular and sacred, perhaps, but here it is. Since it is here we have to take account of it. So the rough division urged upon us by many religionists and by many secularists is that religion is an affair of the individual. It is the business of the ecclesiastical leaders to deepen the springs of individual spiritual life, and to remain off the premises sacred to social and political enterprises.

At the outset let me remark that this type of speech is seldom altogether sincere. I do not

mean to accuse anyone of purposeful deceit, or of talking with the tongue in the cheek. Perhaps "inconsistency" would be a better term than "insincerity." What I mean is that when the industrial or political leader sees an ecclesiastical prophet waging war against the inequities of the industrial system he feels aggrieved that the prophet is not devoting his whole time to the saving of precious souls, but when he learns that the prophet has changed his opinion and is hailing the industrial system as an agent of righteousness, the industrialist pronounces the prophet a statesman. On the other hand, when the ecclesiastical leader, devoted to an established order, sees his brethren questioning that order he recalls them to the saving of individual souls. They are at liberty to scamp the soul-saving quite considerably if they shout loud enough for the approved order. I happen to belong to a denomination which in the South of the United States votes almost solidly for the Democratic party and in the North with almost equal solidity for the Republican party. I have seldom heard a Northern minister of my group criticized for praising the Republican party, and have seldom heard a Southern minister called in question for advocating the election of democrats. If, however, a Northerner should say anything noticeable from his pulpit against the Republican party, or a Southerner should preach

against the Democratic party, each would hear at once from his ecclesiastical fellows that the business of the church is to save souls.

Taking our start again from the Old Testament prophets, it seems almost futile to say much about whether it was always wise for them to speak forth as they did. The same question is empty when applied to modern prophets. For they speak out, anyhow, if there seems to them sufficient reason for doing so. The sufficient reasons are always the deep human and divine values. With any of these values in peril nothing else seems to the prophet worth while, and he breaks forth. With the genuine prophet it is almost never that he is out of agreement with what the principles of his religious group at bottom call for. The group itself, however, may not be as aware of the practical implications of its own principles as is the prophet. It is true too that while the prophet seems radical he is more in touch with the genius of his group as revealed in its past than are those who think of themselves as soundly conservative.

Any religious group which is actuated by high moral ideals is always developing within itself the type of prophetic character which seeks to hold the group to the ideals in its relation to social and national policies. I do not know that, abstractly considered, it makes much difference whether the prophet speaks out on his own ac-

count or whether he speaks in the name of his group. The main consideration is to get the word spoken. A church will always serve society as long as it breeds from within itself leaders who keep the moral values uppermost in the consciousness of their day. If we teach that the church as such has no responsibility for large social matters, the church tends to make it uncomfortable for the prophet. Sooner or later the church may lose the prophet—indeed, often does lose him—to its own vast disadvantage and the harm of the prophet himself. An incalculable amount of prophetic pioneering is admittedly done far from church circles.

The chief reason for the utterance of the prophet, and for the support of the prophet by the church in that utterance, is the moral values themselves in their significance for human life. A second reason for the prophet's expecting the sympathy of the church in his stand against social conditions which harm men is that the church cannot do even the most elemental work for men in the face of some general hindrances. Let us look for a moment at the task of the church as evangelist in the simplest forms—the winning of men to accept Christ as Saviour and Lord. Paul said once that men cannot hear the gospel unless some one be sent to preach to them. How, though, can men hear if there is no chance to hear because of the exhaustion in which their

daily labor leaves them? In spite of the immense progress in working conditions the world over the advance has not been so great, even in the most civilized countries, as to create an environment notably favorable to the laboring man's interest in spiritual realms. Take a single aspect of the laborer's plight at the present time—the fear of unemployment which haunts like a nightmare the minds of workers by the thousands in all countries. It is utterly frivolous to reply to this that those fear unemployment most who are always at work. Mental distresses are more torturing than physical. The sense of insecurity terrifies men to-day as never before. It is fortunate that we have got beyond the cheap twaddle that used to tell us that religion is intended for just such conditions, conditions which make it necessary for men to cast their care on the Lord, and all the rest of that cant. Casting one's own care on the Lord is legitimate enough, but casting care as to one's children is a bit different. Now, there is no way to meet the fact that present-day physical conditions militate against spiritual conditions except by enforcing the facts upon public attention. Inasmuch as the church has avenues by which public attention can be reached and arrested, it is obvious that the prophet has the highest of rights for crying aloud to the church and sparing not.

May I recall what I said in an earlier chapter? There are phases of the existence of communities which flatly contradict the gospel of Jesus. The prophet cannot adjust himself to those contradictions. The others of us can. The longer we live, the more clearly we see how possible it is for utterly contradictory propositions to find lodgment in one and the same brain. This does not imply hypocrisy. It means that the process of moralization proceeds very slowly. It might not proceed at all if we did not have prophets to reveal the contradictions and force them inescapably upon our thinking.

The task of creating a social and national and international and racial order in human affairs that will not contradict the teaching of Jesus ought to be at least in part that of the Christian Church. To say nothing of the material contradictions, take the enthusiasm over the type of hero fostered by present-day civilization—the masterful, aggressive, self-assertive leader who rules by force of one variety or another. I do not refer to warriors, or even to industrial leaders who might conceivably put their will on the world by control of the materials which men must have in order to exist. I refer, rather, to the dominating characters who, because they have been successful in some direction, assert themselves in too many other directions, or the men who get such hold on the popular imagina-

tion that their word "goes" everywhere—bulldozers of human thinking—men who jam things through. For the most part such result may do good, for it apparently meets popular acceptance, but it is of the wrong spirit and temper for any kingdom of truth. Let us be thankful that the fear of such leaders is never before the mind of the prophet.

Again, take the overemphasis on self-interest which so largely rules social thinking. Self-interest is self-interest, and calling it enlightened does not make it any the less self-interest. Of course we hear to-day of the larger self, which includes our interest in other selves, but such speech tends to confusion, or is a complete shifting of the ground. Anyone who knows human nature at all is aware that self-interest is not the sole moving force in the experience of men, that men on the whole are not by nature unfitted for co-operative effort, with other motives besides their own self-interest. We need not be surprised, then, when the prophet rails forth against the whole self-interest, competitive system which the defenders of established order assume with irritating complacency to be the last word of social wisdom. If we have nothing but self-interest at the start, we shall have nothing but self-interest at the finish. The chief enlightenment that can come to self-interest is that it is not the only compelling factor in the world,

and that taken by itself it will achieve only disaster.

Whether the system contradicts the principles for which the Christian prophet stands or not, we are reminded, the prophet needs to heed the enormous complexity and intricacy of social forces. The social organism is most delicate and we must always move carefully. Indeed we must. That is just the reason why we cannot get along without the prophet. The forces are admittedly numerous and various. The ordinary man gets lost in their play and interplay. If the prophet does not hold moral factors constantly before us, nobody else is likely to, not because everybody else is indifferent, but because most men do not see what is going on. Truth is mighty and will prevail only as some persons are mighty enough to make it prevail. The more complex our life becomes the more we need the simple mind. The more delicate the social organism the more we need the strenuous, even raucous voice that tells us not to lose sight of the dependence of such an organism for its existence upon moral factors. The financial leaders remind us often enough that all modern business transactions depend upon mutual confidence, that the mechanism of exchange is so finely delicate that a shock to confidence in one land may imperil credit the world over. Every reason, then, for listening to him who labors to

stiffen mutual trust and good will. So in the moral realm—the diversity of other factors makes it important that the moral issues be not pushed to one side. The imponderability of the spiritual is just the reason why it should be kept out in the open place. It may easily elude us.

Another protest against prophetic utterance in social concerns comes from those who tell us that the prophet has few constructive suggestions, that he merely raises an outcry without telling what to do. There is considerable force in this charge. We shall meet the complaint again when we come to look at some perils of prophecy. It is true that many a prophet thinks that all duties have been fulfilled in saying things, whereas the heart of the morality which the prophet himself proclaims lies in the realm of doing. Nevertheless, this charge against the prophet is badly overworked. The social organism has to depend upon specialization. The prophet would in all likelihood never think of calling himself an expert, but that is what he is nevertheless. It is his function to get moral questions up, and not let them down until they are settled. As to the details of the process of settling—those may be the duty of another type of specialist.

I once knew a distinguished thinker, himself a moral leader of genuine power, who became profoundly perturbed with some of his brother

moralists who in a crisis of a nation, when policies were necessarily taxing the utmost power of statesmen, kept shouting at the statesmen to do something and to do it at once. My friend thought that in that particular juncture the statesmen were doing all they could, and were rendering as fine a moral quality of service as could be expected. He avowed that these professed prophets were like men standing at the bedside of a sick man "bawling" to skilled physicians to cure the patient, when that was what the physicians were straining their utmost to do. Now, this rebuke to overzealous and not over-intelligent moral leaders may have in this instance been deserved. The resemblance of the prophets, however, to men calling out for the cure of the patient is quite suggestive. There have been times when such a cry has been altogether pertinent. It has been easy for men to give up the search for cures too soon, and the searchers for cures have been held to their task by the incessantly uttered calls for cures. Not a long memory is required to-day to reach back to the period when diseases like tuberculosis, especially in the form of "consumption" as it was then called, and cancer of any type were looked upon as necessarily and inevitably fatal. Only when society began to demand of scientific specialists some method of better dealing with these so-called incurable ailments were the im-

proved methods found. Indeed, some of those who called out "Cure the patient" were themselves scientific workers demanding of other specialists some relief for humanity. The result has been that the specialists have been urged on, not to complete success indeed, but to results beyond anything that seemed possible a generation ago. In the more general social spheres the insistence of the prophet has helped create and has voiced demands which have been met by expert skill to which the prophet himself has not thought of laying claim.

There is an obligation also upon the religious group to give the prophet a hearing because of the extent to which the church is riveted into an established order. This is not intended as a reflection upon the church, for the church on earth must live on earth. There is no way the church can withdraw from the present world. That experiment has been made and the result has been found sadly wanting. There have been ages in the history of Christianity when the Christians have given up the present earthly order as past all redemption. They have at such times sought to withdraw from the world for the sake of saving their own souls. The difficulty always has been that such withdrawal has been impossible. The world follows into the place of retreat, at least into the consciousness of those attempting to retreat. The inescapable fact that

men have physical organisms makes the world present to men in one fashion or another. Moreover, the organized system of the outside world gets into the retreat through connections which simply have to be established. It is as if a community socialistic in itself had to buy its raw materials and dispose of its surplus products in dealing with an outside world not at all socialistic.

In any give-and-take with the world the religious group becomes to a degree fashioned after the pattern of the world. To take the outstanding historical illustration, we may quote the remark now trite, but nevertheless significant that the Christianization of the Roman Empire meant the Roman imperialization of Christianity. Those who break forth in stern denunciation of Christianity's acceptance of the position of the official religion in the Empire of Rome are speaking out of the ample knowledge of the after-centuries. There was nothing else to do in the fourth century. So it has been with adjustment after adjustment since. It is not too much to say that most of the connecting bonds between the church and the world have come about without anybody's deliberately planning them. The leaders of the church probably did not know where they were going until after they had arrived at a destination. I have just used the term "connecting bonds." The term is alto-

gether too mechanical. It would be nearer the truth to say that the church at successive eras has breathed the social air of those periods, has fed on the general conceptions of the periods, has without knowing it herself caught the spirit of a period. All this shows itself not only in the organization of the church, but in the thinking of the church. The theology of the various centuries through which the church has lived has taken even its terminology from the institutions of the times. God has been conceived of as King after the fashion of kings of a given era, in the early days of the career of the church with little enough resemblance to that ideal of kingship which the northern tribes of Israel set before Rehoboam in the question as to whether he would be a king for them after the manner of a servant of the people. God was conceived of in terms of arbitrary power. In feudal days the notion of dues to a ruler—of honors paid to a lord—shaped even the phrasings of the theory of atonement. When men began to make much of law just as law, an abstract legality showed itself in the treatises of church thinkers. So it went in the old days, so it goes to-day, so it will go always. We must face here something inevitable and inescapable.

We are often told to-day that the church is under the control of the possessing classes. I have had occasion to remark before that this is

not true in that the so-called possessing classes, who may be in the church, seek to control directly the church for the purposes of their own groups. There is little of such attempt, except by groups outside who seldom take an interest in the church save when they see an opportunity to utilize the church to arouse a warlike patriotism, or to check what seems to be social radicalism, or to preach content to oppressed laborers at home, or in foreign fields where missionaries work. This is not the performance of churchmen themselves, however. A church official would to-day hardly think of trying to utilize his church organization to estop the voice of the prophets of better human conditions.

The real peril lies deeper. It comes out of the very springs of the life we live. Or certain social conceptions are in the air we breathe, and enter into all our thought, religious and every other kind. There has been effectively taught, for example, in America the doctrine that the Almighty has called the nation to the manifest destiny of being guide, philosopher and friend to about all the other nations of the earth. So far as the people are concerned this has been the driving force back of all America's adventures in imperialism. The man on the street feels kindly toward the Philippines and Mexico and the Orient. He thinks of America as the nation most able to help the less-advanced peoples. Here,

now, is a noble feeling, not only capable at times of being played upon by the politicians and those back of them, but capable also of change into a feeling of racial and national superiority. Just where the noble sentiment passes over into the ignoble we cannot tell. The man who suffers the transformation is himself the last to suspect that any transformation has taken place. It is never to be forgotten that the difficulty in all such problems is with those whose motives seem to themselves to be the highest. This is especially true with captains of industry who are in position of control over the masses of workers in a modern enterprise. The more conscious any one of such leaders is of his own rectitude the harder it is to deal with him. He feels kindly toward his men. He desires above all else to do well by them. When he discovers that workmen of to-day do not especially relish having anyone "do well by them," he is at first bewildered, then aggrieved, and then enraged. This is why the prophet is so necessary, and why also the prophet is so thoroughly hated by men of this type. The ordinary servant of the church is not equal to the task of speech necessary in such situations.

Again, we need the prophet because of the need to-day of what might be called a spirit of collective prophecy in religious groups. One of the most interesting and important social questions just now is the relation of organized groups in

society to one another and to general public opinion. It used to be thought, or, rather, taken for granted, that a group is simply the sum of the individuals composing it. Now we are recognizing the truth that when individuals come together in groups they cease to be individuals in the same sense as when they are separate. Together they act differently and think differently and feel differently from the way they act and think and feel as separate individuals. They have created a new entity by joining themselves together. Such entities can give utterances to ideas baser than any they would think of voicing as separate individuals—as, for example, when they are an excited mob. On the other hand they can in religious assembly, or in any assembly where high moral appeal is made, rise to loftier heights of prophetic utterance than they can ever attain to separately. Herein is the worth of resolutions on moral issues by religious groups. The objection is often urged against such expressions that after the assembly has dissolved the individual voters feel misgiving about their votes and wonder if they have not gone too far. Yet those same voters could hardly be prevailed upon to go back and rescind the vote. In spite of their misgiving they feel that the resolution ought to stand. Without being able to tell just why, they would not undo what they have done. It is almost never that a religious as-

sembly deliberately revokes forward-looking utterance on a vast social issue. Individuals may resent the action, and yet those same individuals half-realize that together with their fellows they for a moment reached a height they could not have reached separately. It is not a matter of going too far. Height rather than distance is the proper expression. Assemblies are not likely to go too high on the social issues. No individual alone might have been able to pen the phrases of the collective utterance without the quickening inspiration of the group. Together the group frames a word which restates an ideal or gives a phrase an unforgettably new turn.

At this point the obvious criticism appears that if we are to think of collective prophecy, we must not forget that churches are themselves in modern life collectively in many ways, that even in the carrying on of church enterprises and in spreading the gospel to so-called non-Christians the church has to buy and sell materials and hire laborers, and that her own policies do not always illustrate the social principles for which she puts herself on record in formal assembly. The force of this criticism we have to admit. The church authorities ought to take the lead in shaping more Christian economic policies for the church as a buyer and seller, and as an employer and director of labor. They have never done enough in these directions

to make ecclesiastical policies pathfinders toward larger social justice. Therefore the cry at times arises both from conservatives and radicals that the church ought to put her own house in order before she announces principles for the whole economic system.

The church ought, indeed, to set her own house in order. Nevertheless, the complaint that she ought not to pronounce on social matters till she can square her proclamations by her deeds is not quite as pertinent as some seem to think. It is the duty of the church primarily to announce the ideals of a Christian kingdom. She may admit with shame and humiliation that she has not yet and is not now living up to her own ideals, but that does not release her from the need of announcing the ideal. Some of the mightiest political documents in human history take their force almost wholly from the statement of ideals which have not been lived up to by the nations adopting the documents. The United States has never lived up to the doctrine of equality of men set forth in the Declaration of Independence. Our nation has flagrantly violated that doctrine again and again. We confess all this with candor and yet with sorrow, but we are not likely to insist upon cutting the statement of doctrine out of our quotations of the Declaration of Independence.

Moreover, there is a question as to how far

the prophet, individual or collective, should go in seeking to put a social message actually into practice in a complex community. We shall have occasion to see later how the prophet can best determine the actual course of progress. Suffice it to say here that his wisest course is the direct appeal to public opinion. The human values cannot be permanently set on high until human beings in masses insist upon their being set on high. The prophet, individual or collective, must always keep in full sight the importance of that appeal. When, however, the prophet seeks to advise kings, so to speak, on the details of policy rather than on the ideal, he is likely to take from the edge of his utterance as a prophet. He would better give himself to the development of public demands which practical statesmen can competently meet. Understand now, I am speaking of the prophetic aspect. The church may have within its membership men of practical ability in statesmanship. As a social entity she has a right, if she chooses, to send representatives to the councils of rulers, or to the halls of legislators, to make recommendations as to proposed social courses. The prophet, however, would better remain away from such councils and halls. He is of not much use as a committeeman, for committees must act on the basis of give-and-take—of taking a half-loaf if securing the whole is out of the question. In

such an atmosphere the prophet is not likely to accomplish much worth while.

This is not to say that the prophet is to speak in such fashion as to leave his ideals vague and misty. There is no worse misreading of prophetic utterance than that which gets the notion that the prophets were declaimers of the abstract. They knew in the concrete the actual situations of which they spoke.

It is high time for us to look at some of the social values for which the Old Testament prophets stood, values which are of perennial worth. No matter how complete the change in the forms of life and conduct between Old Testament days and our own, there are some likenesses which have thus far kept the prophets from getting out of date. To begin with I do not think it is too much to say that we are now seeing, even in the lands which most assuredly call themselves Christian, a distinct revival of a heathenism much like that against which the prophets always fought. It is the fashion still to lay almost everything undesirable on the World War, I know, but that war was at least in measure responsible for loosening many of the safeguards which the civilizing processes had gradually built up through the generations. William Temple, Archbishop of York, once said that the Greek artists never dared let themselves go, that they always held themselves back by

severe self-restraint, the reason being that they dared not let themselves go in the presence of an almost overwhelmingly heathen world around them. Out of that controlled restraint came the glories of Greek art. Now, heathenism is likely to show itself in this breaking loose from all restraint. Inhibitions developed through generations of social training are sneered at. Even in art to-day, to follow out suggestiveness of the Archbishop's remark about the art of the Greeks, we see flaunting of all restraint hailed as a virtue. The result is just what we might expect. There is a return to the primitive, not to say the barbaric, or barbarous. Art seems at least for the hour to be a looking back toward those dark days when in paganism men gave themselves to the expression of the hideous. There is no need of mentioning names, but some artists at the present day, in admitted command of technique and beauty in detail, take for their subjects themes that might just as well have been treated in the days of unnatural and inhuman views of the world before there was any step toward civilization at all. In conception some of this work is a deliberate seeking of the level of tribes in the Central African forests. It is more sophisticated indeed. Moreover the apologists for this grade of artistic expression may say that, whereas the first artists looked out upon life in a blind, bewildering groping and created material figures

to correspond, the artist of to-day returns to the same blindness purposely as a confession of impotence. We all know this type of speech. It is precisely the same spirit the Hebrew prophet had to contend against all his days. Heathenism does not have to be imported from non-Christian lands. It wells up within us. There is justification for realistic interpretation of it, if the interpretation has any balance or perspective—balance and perspective sadly lacking just now.

So also with the current craze for self-expression in art and in everything else. If the critic tells us that nothing is more restrained than heathenism in its codes and customs, the answer is that heathenism provides for wild outbreaks and excesses which minister definitely and purposely to the animal and sensual. The prophets were puritan and had to be. The people of Israel when they moved into Canaan were somewhat in the plight of a countryman, or a desert dweller, who has moved into a city. The struggle came over their not yielding to the lure of the material as did the people round about. Enough of them did yield to reveal the seductions of the land flowing with milk and honey.

The conquest over the lure of the material has never yet been more than partially won, and that is the hardest of all conquests. All through the Scriptures runs the warning against the material things of this present world. We must

believe that the last conceivable moral victory will be that of the use of material wealth for the highest moral and human good. That victory, however, is a long distance in the future. In dealing with all this seductiveness the recourse of the prophets had to be to a simplicity which must have seemed to their worldly contemporaries altogether barren. It was on the emphasis on a bareness which seemed bleak and stark that the prophets had to rely to force into Israel's consciousness the indispensability of the human values.

The prophets denounced the sins of self-indulgence with terrible force, sins that we to-day are prone to look upon as peculiarly personal. We have gone far in making a distinction between offenses which we call social and those which we think of as individual and personal. The prophet did not know much about such distinctions. We may say, if we please, that this was a mark of primitiveness in his thinking, this failure to draw a line around the individual in his separateness. Very inadequate thinking this, that makes a social group responsible for the individual, and the individual responsible for the group! We admit all the inadequacy, and then call attention to the trend to-day toward a closer connection between individual conduct and social consequences than that of the generation now passing. The truth is that democ-

racy, in America at least, is moving away from the extreme individualism which has always seemed so peculiarly American. Distinguished students of history have told us that the American type—so far as there is one—has been the outcome of frontier conditions, and that these conditions have been measurably determinative even with those who have had no direct experience of them. That is to say, until comparatively recently a man who wished to live what he called his own life could get away from the more settled parts to the larger, more open spaces. This possibility had its effect on all sections of the land. It is readily discernible that in frontier conditions the individualist could do what he pleased without serious threat to society. This single possibility has been in the minds of individualists through all our history, though we may be permitted the surmise that very often the extreme individualist likes to be near enough to the social centers to get an audience for the exhibition of his individualism. Now all the old, free system has vanished. Communities have become too much congested to allow the old-time extremes of individualistic activity. We have been told now and again of the individual's right to go to the devil in his own way. Society recognizes no such right in the individual if going to the devil involves the welfare of anyone else. Even the spectacle of a

man going to the devil in his own way is kept off the highways if the spectacle is socially harmful. The community will protect itself and it ought to do so. All the present-day irritation over the inquiry of society into socially harmful activities of individuals is inevitable. The present theory, sound as it seems to me, is that society exists for the sake of giving the individual a chance at the largest and fullest life. This does not by any means imply that the individuals have a right to use society for their own enjoyment if the enjoyment means loss to other individuals. A community which has insisted upon controlling powerful financial leaders in the name of the common welfare is not in a position to find fault with the prophet who proclaims against private courses which lead to public evils.

Again, the prophet of the old days was remarkable in the length he was willing to go to put moral values even ahead of national values, or at least ahead of national values as ordinarily conceived of. There has probably never been a religion more definitely nationalistic than that of Israel. At the beginning of her history her God was a God of battles, marching before his people to lead them to victory. The deliverance from Egypt was so stupendous in the thought of Israel as to constitute a revelation that the God of Israel was forever devoted to Israel as a nation. The fixed item of belief with all loyal and

patriotic Israelites was that God was a God of Israel in altogether unique fashion. Now, as soon as the greater prophets appeared they began to teach that the favor of Israel's God was conditioned on Israel's conduct. This to us now is an elementary commonplace in our understanding of Old Testament history, but what should we ourselves say to-day if in time of aroused patriotic fervor someone should speak in like fashion of America? We are indeed willing to concede as an abstract proposition that if America does not depend on moral policies, she will lose her place among the nations. Who takes that seriously, except when it is stated abstractly? My country right or wrong is the assumption of patriotism. If any preacher had said during the World War, "My country only when she is right," he would have found himself in dire trouble forthwith. He might have meant nothing more than that he would only support the policies of his country which he felt to be right. He might not have meant that he would break allegiance with his country or give aid and comfort to the enemy, but he would not have escaped the charge of treason and perhaps punishment therefor. We can never cease to be astonished at a double marvel in the history of Israel—the miracle of the boldness of the prophets who rebuked the sins of the nation, when the nation meant everything to the sub-

jects thereof, and the tolerance of that rebuke by the nation itself. At no later period of human history would such prophecy have been endured.

Akin in boldness to all this was the utterance of men like Amos and Isaiah whose words could only have meant a denial of the uniqueness of Israel's position as a nation. Amos declares that God indeed led Israel up from Egypt, but asks if he did not also lead the Philistines out from Crete. There is more of a maddening quality in this sentence than we to-day can conceive at all —I mean when we look back at the actual feeling in Israel. Similar remarks about any nation to-day might easily, to the citizens of that nation, seem equally maddening. For the vast majority of the members of any nation take for granted the manifest destiny of their nation as having a mission on earth superior at least in some respects to that of all other nations. There is no arguing with this feeling. The sentiment can, indeed, be made the basis of a noble patriotism, but it easily lends itself to national pride of the wrong sort and sows the seeds of bitterness which keep bearing their evil fruit for centuries. Except in the words of prophets national humility has thus far in the history of peoples proved an almost impossible virtue. There is no such virtue, at least not on a wide scale. Think of the famous word of Isaiah that "in that day shall

Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance." Suppose some such word as that had been spoken in America before the war passions of the Great War had had time to cool. Suppose some soul, filled with the spirit of Isaiah had placed the United States in a trio of which Germany and Austria had been the other two. It is fair to say that few American religious leaders would have thought such an utterance worthy of preservation in American literature.

There are some further instances in the Old Testament of putting moral issues above national policies that are altogether unique in historical annals. I have already mentioned Jeremiah, but he cannot be mentioned too often. Some months ago a suggestive and scholarly article appeared in an American magazine written by a military man dealing with Jeremiah as a defeatist. The article had its chief interest in a revelation of how the conduct of Jeremiah would appear to the military mind looking through the coloring conceptions of present-day patriotism. There can be no doubt that the conduct of Jeremiah reads to-day like that of a man devoid of patriotism. To official Jerusalem Jeremiah must have seemed a traitor in virtually

counseling his fellow citizens to come to terms with the Chaldeans. The truth now seems clear that Jeremiah had reached the point where he was judging his country as the vehicle or the instrument for the propagation of spiritual truth. He apparently felt that the truth could be as well set forth under an overlordship of foreigners as under Israel's own self-government. Now, it requires the lapse of centuries for men to be able to appreciate any such point of view. Nobody to-day questions that Jeremiah was altogether patriotic. He thought, however, of the mission of his country in terms that no nation of to-day would tolerate for an instant, if any serious crisis were at hand. In the day of Jeremiah such a crisis was at hand, and Jeremiah did not allow the urgency of his country's need to blind him as to the chief value of Israel's destiny, her opportunity to treat moral concerns as supreme. Jeremiah is the outstanding instance of consistency in maintaining that the moral values must have right of way at all times. I am not saying that such doctrine is any more practicable or any wiser to-day than in his day. I am merely saying that Jeremiah was just as consistent as I have indicated. The approved patriotic answer to the Jeremiah of the sixth century B. C. and to the Jeremiahs of the twentieth century A. D. is that with the enemy actually at the gate the preservation of the na-

tion must be regarded as imperative above all things else. Whereas Jeremiah said that with the enemy at the gate or anywhere else the supreme concern is the preservation of the nation's ideals.

I do not see, either, how the preaching of the doctrine of the "remnant" could have been fitted into any notion of patriotism which has ever been effective as a measure of practical statesmanship. All nations talk in terms of numbers. It would be an affront to the conventional patriot to tell him that his nation ought to go through some sort of sifting-out process to get down to the lives of genuine value. In these democratic days any talk of a remnant in the prophetic sense would savor of treason if not of political blasphemy. Just how the notion of the remnant ever was made acceptable to the audiences of the prophets is past all comprehension, by anyone steeped in the dogmas of our time as to the divinity of majorities.

It is from this point of view of the complete supremacy of moral values, of the ideal of a moral human life as interpreting the character of God, and of the doctrine of a moral God as re-enforcing moral life among men, that we have to think of the prophets as patriots. The latest writer on international thought, Miss F. Marian Stawell, has pointed out to us that, taking the total history of the thinking of Israel about in-

ternationalism, the nation never got clearly on to the acceptance of internationalism. Miss Stawell herself indicates the reason, which was the conviction of the prophets that Israel was in possession of higher moral ideals than those of any other nation, and the conviction also that the preservation of those ideals might at one time call for one practical policy and at another time for a different plan. So we have Israelitish utterance swinging all the way from the lofty universalism of the Second Isaiah and the profound humanity of the book of Jonah to the restrictive legislation of the postcaptivity period. Probably all my readers would share my feeling that Second Isaiah and Jonah are final statements of the temper which will one day make possible a brotherhood of nations and races. In these utterances the Old Testament rises to its loftiest reaches. Still, it will not do to disparage the work of those who sought to put their conception of Israel's moral worth into a position of safety. Exclusivism which showed itself in prohibition of intermarriage with non-Jewish families looks small and mean, but such exclusivism is thoroughly intelligible in its basic aim. The method may have been mistaken, though we who approve the restriction of immigration and the strict regulation of intermarriage between races are not in good position to say much on this theme. What the old-time

restrictionists were thinking of was the safeguarding of the ideals of Israel. If it had not been for the unsurpassable glory of the words of the Second Isaiah and of Jonah the universalistic ideal could never have made its everlasting impression on mankind; and if it had not been for the terrible intensity of the restrictionists there might not have been any group to carry even the record of the ideal down to us of later times. The universally-minded indeed spoke for all times, and the particularists spoke for particular times. I repeat that the narrow policy may have been mistaken, but that is no warrant for our forgetting the aim of the policy.

The prophetic ideal of the Old Testament of largest significance for us just now—or, at least, of largest interest for us—is that of world peace. One or two considerations as to the prophecies of peace must always stand at the center of our thinking. The first is that the prophets were not merely dreaming dreams about peace, or, at least, they did not think of themselves as thus dreaming. The noble prose and the inspired poetry of the Old Testament was not that of the workshop of the literary man. Whatever art there is in the utterances is probably of unconscious spontaneity. The words naturally and inevitably fell into the form which such words take on the lips of men of genius. The men themselves, however, were much too serious to be thinking about

turns of speech. I once went in company with an important leader of public opinion to hear an address on a public theme by another leader. The address was polished to the last possibility —indeed, was a marvel of elegance. My companion was not impressed, though he shared the views of the speaker. His reason was that so much effort had been put on the speech as a speech that he could not help doubting the earnestness and even the sincerity of the orator. In fine, the orator was just "being eloquent." Without disparaging in the least the artistic skill of the authors of the Old Testament prophecies on war and peace, we have to say that their style was indeed themselves. They got themselves into utterance. They lived an intense hatred of war, and that too in a day when orthodox theology wrote phrases about the Lord of Israel as a God of battles and a mighty leader of hosts.

The second fact to be always regarded is that the peace prophets did not talk from the point of view of policy as ordinarily conceived. The practical politician, ancient and modern, always professes loyalty to ideals. His difficulty is that he can never see any way to make the ideals real at any given juncture. So he is always talking of what we can, and cannot, do *now*. The prophets, on the other hand, dealt with ideals that were of everlasting value. The time-sense, or the sense

of what can be done now, did not weigh overmuch with them.

Just a word about the prophetic attitude toward war. Of recent years we have heard much about war as a mere instrument of national policy. War, we have been told, is in itself morally indifferent. All depends on the use made of it. The same remark is made about war as about wealth, wealth in itself being morally indifferent and depending on the use to which it is put. There can hardly be any worse confusion, just from the intellectual point of view, than such an interpretation of war. Wealth in the last analysis is material goods—consumptive goods or productive goods—all in one form or another, instruments or tools. Of course everything of ethical or spiritual significance depends on the use we make of such tools. The material tools of war, it may be conceded, are themselves morally indifferent. Even the deadliest explosive might be used to blast out a tunnel or to dig a Panama Canal. From this angle a good word might be said for poison gas, if its killing powers might be turned toward noxious insects. The tools of war, however, are not impersonal, but personal. The predictions that the advance of science would make war an expert service between highly trained specialists have not been fulfilled and will not be fulfilled. The more scientific war has become the more soldiers it

has demanded, until it has reduced men by the millions to the degradation of being mere tools instead of in any degree ends in themselves. Whole populations must be warred against—adults killed as far as possible, babies starved, the surviving adolescent generation sent out upon the world without adequate training and with poisoned minds. The physical consequences of war are not the worst. False ways of thinking induced by propaganda, responsiveness to lies, and expertness in lying, inability to see things as they are—these are not incidents, but essentials in modern warfare. The sword is in itself merely an instrument, we are told. The use of the figure of speech—calling war a sword—makes possible our befooling ourselves into conceiving of war as an instrument. The instruments of war are men, women, and children. It is against war as thus violating human values that Hebrew prophecy blazes forth. The terrific indictment of the nations in the opening sentences of the book of Amos has to do with the sheer barbarities of war policies, policies which at the time may have been regarded justifiable as causing terror to enemies.

Once more, we now and again hear war justified on the ground that we are dealing with foes who have become so hardened by rage as to be in themselves amenable only to physical approach. The humanity has been hardened out of

them. They must be regarded just as physical obstacles. This might do for our conception of strong-minded and stony-hearted criminals. We do maintain police forces to deal with just such anti-social, "case-hardened" offenders, but the distance between such elements—few in any community in comparison with its total population—and whole nations does away with all relevance and pertinence in the argument. Whole nations cannot be regarded thus as predominantly physical obstacles. It is a condemnation of war that it can ever bring nations to look upon one another as anything else than groups of human beings—men, women, and children.

VI

PROPHETS AND PROGRESS

THIS theme is inherently important, and worth considering also because there are those who to-day are telling us that the idea of progress is illusory in itself, and that it is a somewhat late arrival in human thinking, to be tested out by fact. The ancients, it seems, looked back and not forward to the age of gold. The Oriental peoples have been until yesterday or to-day content to leave things as they are, especially the Chinese, who until quite recently made conservatism almost a cult, in one of their national ceremonies exalting a motionless, unchanging figure as symbolizing the essential genius of China. The widespread notion of progress in western Europe and kindred nations came with political events like the French Revolution and the American Revolution, and with intellectual overturnings like that brought about by Darwinism. Through the most of the world's history, and over the most of the world's surface, the masses of mankind have not been concerned with social history as progress. If the ordinary man could get enough material goods to carry him through life and leave a surplus for his family, so that

his survivors might have a little better chance than himself, he has been content.

It may be well for us to hear all this. The events of the past quarter century have shaken our faith in a fate that through evolutionary processes has been conceived of as carrying us on and up, even in spite of ourselves, and our faith also in a democracy that we have thought of as bound to come right in the end, "whether or no." Democracy is no longer looked upon as tending to progress inherently. Both the catchwords of nineteenth century, evolution and democracy, have been found to bring forth pessimism as well as optimism. The evolution of the universe is no longer regarded as inevitably leading to the survival of any fittest except those fittest to survive. Keen critics tried from the beginning to get evolutionists to note that the fittest to survive does not necessarily mean the morally fit, but they got no hearing. The "age" was bound to have it that the evolutionary processes were carrying us upward. I know how hazardous predictions are, but I feel free to forecast that within the lifetime of men now listening to me the doctrine of evolution will not cease to be a marvel of scientific achievement indeed, but will come to be regarded as a marvel in another direction—in its power to beguile the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth into drawing fan-

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tastic and grotesque conclusions which misled men by the hundreds of thousands. The trend is now reversed, and pessimists are reminding us that all cosmic movement may run straight downhill, so far as human interests are concerned, and not for an instant get out of touch with the sacrosanct formula about the progress from simplicity to complexity. As for democracy, the question is fundamentally serious as to whether mankind as a whole has not got hold of destructive forces before arriving at moral self-control in the handling of the forces. Who knows that democracy may not wipe out civilization in the next war—or the next two, at the farthest?

All this is worth considering. It is a needful corrective to the easy-going optimism that assumes that in this world of ours everything is bound to come out aright at last. There is much in modern pessimism that at first glance might seem to be in harmony with the spirit of Old Testament prophecy, for that prophecy was optimistic only in a conditional sense. The prophet never allowed his grip to slacken on the essential that the relation between Israel and the Lord was moral and therefore conditional. One of the complaints of Israel's prophets was the tendency of the people to take this moral relationship as fixed in the nature of things, to hold good no matter what Israel might do. That is

to say, the one-hundred-per-cent Jewish patriot would concede that Israel might conceivably be punished for wrongdoing, but could never for an instant imagine that the punishment might go so far as to threaten Israel's primacy in the eyes of the Lord. The prophet, on the other hand, saw that transgression might easily threaten national supremacy. It is difficult to read Amos and not get the impression that inasmuch as the favor of Israel's God could be maintained only by Israel's moral obedience, that favor might depart from Israel to some other nation in case of Israel's moral lapse. There are passages in the words of the prophets which indicate that they were in despair much of the time. A memorable sentence tells us that one of them felt that he was preaching only to make the sight and hearing of the people duller—a despair entirely human, not to be taken as final, and yet certainly not to be explained away with any such facility as to make the prophet a complacent embodiment of cheeriness. I have had occasion to say before that the prophets dared look the ugliest facts fairly in the face. They never turned away from facts in the search for a line of least resistance. Their method in dealing with desperate situations was that of the frontal attack.

When we come close to the question of the prophets and progress, however, we must make

due note that the prophets came finally to place the glorious age of Israel in the future. Quite likely they are right who teach that the prophets had no formal theory of progress whatever. They used no term that would suggest such a theory, but at least the later prophets looked forward to a better age, and they could not have thus looked forward without doing all they could to help the nation on toward the noblest consummation. That is all we require to classify them as agents and forces of progress. They believed in progress in the sense of moral change for the better.

Still, we must be careful here not to claim too much. There is pronouncement of doom in the prophets, so that scholars of recognized authority insist that the lighter colors with which even the gloomier prophecies close are so out of harmony with the main tenor of the messages as to suggest interpolation by later hands. This, however, is not all the story. The Second Isaiah is hopeful enough. So is Ezekiel. Moreover, those later hands which did all this alleged interpolation must have caught the spirit of a better time coming at least partially from prophetic quarters. We admit the element of gloom, but even Jeremiah felt that good would come to Israel from the darkest misfortune—the conquest by Babylon.

Again, it is difficult for us to fancy that the

prophets of doom proclaimed their messages merely for the sake of expressing themselves. It is probably true that genuine prophets then, as genuine prophets to-day, spoke because they felt impelled to speak, without studied regard to consequences. If we could get back into the consciousness of the prophets, we should likely find that the burden on their souls simply had to be declared, whether the people approved or not. Here, again, however, we have to reckon with assumptions none the less important because they are unconscious. The prophets were too sound in their fundamental spiritual processes not to be influenced by the possibility of altering conditions for the better. The only irrevocable doom was that which a people might pass upon themselves. Always the people could repent if they would. This kept always open the door to moral betterment, which was the only progress with which the prophets had any concern. They had not much interest in material betterment as such. Under Solomon the chosen people came to their most dazzling national glory. There was a comparatively brief period in the history of the Israelites after David had united the tribes, and while the huge empires like Assyria were busy with affairs nearer home, when Israel had a chance to show some force in empire building. Solomon evidently broke into high society among the nations with alliances

with Tyre and Egypt. He established a court as much Oriental as he could make it, with political marriages with wives from heathen lands, the wives being permitted to build altars for the worship of their own gods. The worst policy imaginable for Israel was to seek to be like the nations around about. Such imitation took the sharpness off what was distinctively Israelitish, that distinctiveness being moral. George Adam Smith has somewhere remarked that whereas the pictures of David in the Old Testament are clearly lined, those of Solomon are hazy. Solomon let slip almost everything morally distinctive. David had grievous faults, but he was himself, and he knew what Israel's religion at least pointed toward. The policy of Solomon would even to-day be applauded by the blazing patriots familiar in our own nation, but that policy was of scant significance. The realm of Israel could not be as big as Egypt or Assyria. Geographical factors limited the development. The prophets were almost the only ones in Israel, however, who got all this in right perspective. It is to be noted, that as they looked back on the history of their land they were not inclined to boast of Solomon.

To return to the point I was more particularly discussing, however, the prophets assumed the possibility of repentance by the people, and that meant moral betterment. Sometimes such

betterment might be the return to an ideal from which men had fallen away, sometimes the advance to a moral view or temper not yet attained. There was in the prophetic message often a note of doom, but whatever doom there might be was that which the people might seal against themselves.

No matter what theory the prophets may have held, or may not have held, we to-day behold in the Old Testament a progressive revelation, and in the progressiveness of that revelation the prophets manifestly had their part. The diffusion of prophetic ideas so that they enter into the thinking and practice of the ordinary people is moral progress. Present-day study of the Old Testament is quite certain that the noblest and loftiest portions of Israel's law came as the result of prophecy. The Israelitish statutes are, in their earliest statements, about what we should expect from a people sharing the primitive religious ideas of the time. Deuteronomy, abounding as it does in fine moral and spiritual quality, shows that something has happened since the phrasing of the primitive statements. The prophets have begun to appear, and have pressed their ideas far enough into common thinking to make possible the acceptance of laws of right dealing with one's neighbors as the laws of God. Laws cannot be so enacted as to remain for generations in the consciousness of men

unless there is a response to and acceptance of them by the people.

There are those of a somewhat doctrinaire cast of intellect who keep repeating to us that it is a step down from the prophet to the legislator, that the spirit of prophecy is free and that of the legislator bound, that the shaping of a statute hardens the moral spirit into that literalism which is akin to moral death. The force in this contention is obvious enough, but it does not overthrow our claim that the acceptance of the ideals of the prophet to such an extent that those ideals become "hardened" into law, if you please, can be listed in our moral assets on the side of progress. Movement in religious advance is never on an even front. Men are far out ahead in some sections of the line and far behind in others. It may become the duty of a prophet to call for further advance beyond some duty which he himself has earlier labored to establish. There was a day in Israel's history when an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was a moral advance, urged by a genuinely prophetic spirit, for the earlier day had demanded a life for a tooth, or had taken a life for a tooth. If this sounds extreme, we may remind ourselves that we can find countries to-day where, in times of popular excitement at least, men lose all proportion in inflicting penalties, and still exact, so to speak, a life for a tooth.

It will not do to get the notion that because the prophet is so often attacking some law, and because some law, or set of legalists is so often attacking him, he is against law. He is on the course which leads to better law. It is unfortunate that in handling a theme like this we have to think so much of law in repressive terms. We conceive that the prophet is the free spirit railing against any legal restriction. We shall, admittedly, always have to rely upon law, even after the last criminal impulses have been driven from human society, otherwise there will be no getting about at all. We might have a community of saints completely redeemed, but suppose each of the saints owned an automobile. Should we call him a prophet who would preach to the saints free and unrestricted movement in reliance upon holy impulses. We should need laws in such a worthy community, or at least rules commonly agreed upon and accepted. All that the critic tells us about the peril of legalism in its working into statutes the utterances of prophets is worthy of constant attention. The generations following those who first wrought a prophetic impulse into law may be of the conservative order who forget, if they ever knew, how the law took its start. They worship what is; and since the law is, they worship it and call it holy. The principle which was holy at the start may be arrested in its development and be

transformed into something unholy. All this is to be watched, but the danger is not overserious if there are prophets at hand to do the watching.

Further, it makes for progress when the prophet gets a people to reading the past from the prophetic vantage point. Occasionally we hear a biblical interpreter protest that we have to discount the portions of Old Testament Scripture which were manifestly written by authors inspired by prophetic leaders. After the mightier prophets had lived through their careers, followers who had been quickened by the prophetic messages ransacked the history of Israel seeking for illustration of the outworking of prophetic principles. Hence some critics will have it that the value of the books thus written is to be disparaged. All that is necessary to say here is that any history worth reading, or that can be read with interest, for that matter, is set down with some principle as guide. History that attempts to tell everything as objective narrative, solely aiming to chronicle events, may be important for reference, but for not much else. It is admitted that in reading history written from the prophetic viewpoint we have to keep that viewpoint constantly before our attention. This necessity nevertheless does not invalidate the truth which the prophetic author is seeking to establish. As illustration we may turn to the passages which tell us that the Lord freely

granted the petition of Israel for a king, and compare them with the other passages which insist that the Lord gave Israel a king in wrath, and that the petition was itself a lapse from loyalty to the Lord. It evidently seemed thus to the prophetic school of historians, and it seems also that, looking at the historic outcomes, the prophetic school had much right to their contention. There is little to be learned from history as a bare chronicle of facts. History becomes perennially fresh and instructive with the discovery of new points of survey from which to gaze back upon it. Such interpretation and reinterpretation is always in order. The prophetic writers saw the woes of Israel as due to violation of the laws of the Lord. It was only natural that in looking back they should make the violations more deliberate than calmer judges would have admitted, but the main point was sound. Getting away from the revelation of the Lord's ideal had led to the trouble.

So the prophetic viewpoint led to utterances on the manifold phases of the life of Israel—laws, history, poems, songs, essays upon the deeper spiritual problems. We must always remember that there were hosts of Israelites who never took much interest in the prophets, or paid any considerable attention to them, but after we have made the largest possible allowances we must reckon as positive gain the extent to which

the prophets enforced upon the interpretation of the history of Israel their moral conceptions.

Another factor which made the prophets agents of progress is a dynamic quality in moral ideas themselves, an impulse to unfolding on their own account. Dr. S. Alexander, of the University of Manchester, in a remarkable booklet on *Art and Its Material*, has taught us that an artist does not always know beforehand precisely what his statue or his novel is to be. He knows in general outline to be sure, but he realizes that any vital idea has a power of self-unfolding, or self-development, or self-movement which finally almost takes it away from the direct control of the artist himself. Dickens used to say that after the characters in his novels were once thoroughly afoot he could not always predict whither they would travel. Something like this may be said of all first-rate utterance. Always the author himself is speaking and yet the word seems to step out beyond the man and take on a stride of its own. This is characteristic of Old Testament prophecy. The prophets appeared at moments to feel that their messages had no relation to themselves. They declared that they could repeat only what the spirit of the Lord gave them. Psychologically, this is altogether intelligible. One of the Old Testament characters whom we should never for an instant claim as of moral consequence is nevertheless so

drawn from life as to be everlastingly significant for the psychology of prophecy. I refer to one at whom we usually smile when we hear his name—Balaam. According to the story, Balaam was small enough in himself to seek to deliver a message entirely controlled by himself, a message in favor of an enemy of Israel, and yet he was big enough to be swept along by an altogether different message about the glory of Israel. If this could be said of a prophet painted as unworthy, or at least as morally double-minded as was Balaam, how much more would it be true of prophets wholly devoted to the Lord of Israel that their prophetic messages swept them far out beyond themselves! It would be just to say that the prophets did not always know what they were saying, if we mean by this, not that they were mechanical transmitters of a message, but that they did not realize the far implications of their words. The first proclaimers of a truth seldom do realize its implications.

Take the relation of prophecy to the apocalyptic. William Temple, Archbishop of York, has made the fruitful remark that after the prophets had announced their truths, those truths were felt to deserve a larger setting than any which could be given by the little land of Israel. The principles were so big that they could not be shut in, or cramped down, to a territory one hundred and fifty miles long by seventy-five miles

wide. Moreover, the other nations—and great nations—kept jostling more and more closely upon Israel, until they had taken from Israel her national independence. So that the movement of events themselves led to a double result —the emphasis on the idea of a "remnant," and that on the idea of the Lord's handling of all the nations of the earth so as to set forth the spiritual principles which were distinctive to Israel. The first result was that which might be called qualitative, leading on to the belief in the saving remnant. Let us not forget that the prophets—until the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel—kept their gaze centered on the nation as the unit. All along the prophets were addressing themselves to individuals, but they nevertheless thought in terms of the nation. Now, it became increasingly evident that the nation as a whole would not accept the teaching of the prophets to the degree that the prophets declared morally necessary, if the nation was to continue to be specially favored of the Lord. The conclusion was therefore inevitable that it would have to be a minority that would make the religion of the Lord effective.

On the other side was what we might call the reflection that ran to quantitative terms. At first the national reverses were explained as the punishments of Israel by the Lord, the nations being used as the instruments of the punishment.

Assyria was nothing but a rod in the Lord's hand. This notion enabled Israel still to look upon Assyria with something like contempt. Assyria could even be pictured as a beast into whose nose the Lord would thrust a hook and lead him back by the way he had come. The nations which in any way befriended Israel were entitled to divine favor. Thus Cyrus was looked upon as girded by the Lord even though he did not know the Lord. The procession of the nations, however, after a while became so impressive that the prophetic teaching prepared the way for that apocalyptic which made all the nations small in the hands of the Lord, with the power of the Lord the dominating force in determining their rises and their falls. It will be readily understood that once the thought turns to groups of mighty nations, with those nations basing their policies chiefly upon physical force, the emphasis on apocalyptic, with the Lord controlling the nations, becomes shifted more to physical than to moral power. The gradations from the higher and finer forms of prophecy to apocalyptic are often difficult to discern, for some prophets tend to apocalyptic utterance and some apocalyptics are unmistakably prophetic. The sure sign of prophecy is the emphasis on the moral, and some apocalyptic keeps the moral uppermost. There are students who think of the book of Daniel as more apocalyptic than pro-

phetic. There can be little doubt that the mold of the work is apocalyptic—gigantic stirrings of nations set forth in pictures and visions. It is significant, however, to note the aptness of the Daniel characterizations of some of the nations in animal or beast form. The prophetic ideal was that of the highest and best attainable morality in terms of the human values. The writer seized unerringly the lower estimate of the human among the nations which he symbolized in animal forms, a symbolization which, by the way, would have seemed appropriate even to those nations themselves. The chosen nation of the Lord was set forth in symbol as thoroughly human.

Nevertheless, I think it is fair to say that in apocalyptic the writers emphasize more that the Lord is powerful than that he is moral. This is not intended as a sweeping condemnation of the apocalyptic, for much of it is supremely moral. Those who claim Jesus as an apocalyptic admit that even though, according to their notions, his ethics were intended to be merely for the "interim" between his day and the day of the supernatural revolution at the hands of God, those ethical principles were surpassingly high, and that in the miraculously established Kingdom men were to be placed according to moral merit.

Yet with all this, the emphasis on the downright exercise of the omnipotence of God which

apocalyptic magnifies is out of line with the morality of the prophets. We have seen enough of this in the types of premillenarianism in our own day which have been substantially apocalyptic. The establishment of a divine kingdom by absolute decree backed up by irresistible force would avowedly, according to the apocalyptic, be ruled by moral principles, but inevitably the emphasis would, in the understanding of the reader of the apocalypse, get around to force.

The very height of the moral ideal of the prophets not only made necessary giving it a wider stage and a larger setting, but a longer time through which to work out its fulfillment. Take the ideal of a virtual brotherhood of peoples—or at least a friendliness in which war would be impossible—the prediction of an era when men should learn war no more. The prophet spoke many centuries ago, but if he were to reappear on earth to-day, he would find men seeking to learn war more assiduously than ever before. There are those who will have it that this means that the prophecies themselves belong to a small-scale movement of events. Distinguished teachers have told us that we cannot hold fast ideals of human life and conduct uttered by men who thought in such scanty space and time-theaters as those of the Hebrews. How, we are asked, can we believe that ideals as to the significance of human life formulated when men

spoke in measures of centuries, or shorter periods, can hold good when men talk fluently of millions upon millions of years? The answer may well be that this question reveals a reversal of the true rank of the qualitative and of the quantitative. The qualitative should come first. The prophet seized qualitative values of final importance, at least for the direction in which they point. The quantitative is secondary. It may have its chief worth as a setting for the qualitative. Centuries yet beyond us will be required to exhaust the meaning of the human ideals of the Hebrew prophets. There are, moreover, phases of truth which are indifferent to time and space. The Greeks attained to expressions of beauty in sculpture and architecture to which all our modern conceptions of the size of the universe are irrelevant. A visitor to the Louvre comes after an entrance off the busy streets of Paris upon the Winged Victory of Samothrace, or the Venus of Milo. Just what difference to the beauty of these masterpieces does it make for the scientist to declare that the Greeks, with all their intellectual acumen, never knew the meaning of a "light-year," and that their astronomical yardsticks were those of pygmies compared with our own? The inquiry is likewise pertinent as to what quantitative measures have to do with the worth of the moral principles grasped by the prophets. We turn to the

passage in Genesis which asks, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Abraham's question is eternally relevant whether the Lord created one sun or the thirty million of Herbert Spencer's sneer. The prophets are factors of progress in that they raise questions which require ages for their proper answer. As the Greeks put questions in philosophy which will not be answered for thousands of years so the prophets set men on an unending moral search.

Some of the questions lead to answers far different from those the prophets may have foreseen. I have mentioned apocalyptic as arising out of the prophet's thinking in national terms. Just note for a moment the inherent logic, or the pressure of events, which led the interpretations of prophecy out beyond the earlier national conceptions. The explanation of events by the prophets at first proceeded on the assumption that the prosperity of the nation was the evidence of divine favor. This might be made to appear plausible as long as the success seemed to depend upon natural processes. Success as a token of the divine favor was not new to Israel, or to the peoples in Canaan among whom they dwelt. It was a frequent complaint of prophets like Hosea that Israel had lost sight of her true Lord by following after the local baals who were popularly supposed to bestow fertility upon the fields. The prophets had to keep the moral char-

acter of the Lord before the people to prevent them from falling into the licentiousness which attended the worship of the baals, the people giving themselves to the notion that honoring generative processes in worship would honor the similar processes of the baals out of which the fertility of fields and flocks would result. The prophets had a long battle, lasting till after Jeremiah's day, to get it into the mind of the nation that the Lord of Israel was the Lord of fertility, but that he could be worshiped only in moral exercises. This warfare of the prophets against the baals which continued, as I have intimated, even after Elijah, the great Baal-fighter, had been dead for centuries, was also a battle for the belief in the oneness of Israel's God. As long as the people gave their chief attention, each to his local baal, there was not much likelihood that Israel would arrive at full belief in the oneness of God. Here, again, the intellectual idea of the oneness of God came as a by-product of a moral conception of God. The prophets were principally concerned with the moral character of God, but they, likely without much intellectual reflection of a formal type, so urged the moral nature of God upon their hearers that those hearers inevitably conceived of him as one.

Coming back now to success as a test of divine favor, the Israelites observed that other nations were successful even when they themselves were

suffering defeat. I have had occasion to say again and again that the conclusion of the ordinary man, the plain man, the man of the street, in the presence of the victory of Assyria or Babylon over the chosen nation might well have been that the outside nations not only had gods, but gods more powerful than the God of Israel. That would have been the path of what we call common sense, but the prophets refused to take it. What is there in the history of religious thought which flies more directly against the obvious facts than the conclusion that when Israel was overwhelmed by Assyria and Babylon these nations were used of the Lord to set Israel's truth on high? Here, again, we have not formal reflection, but an unshakeable belief in the supremacy of Israel's moral values. The prophets would not yield a hair's breadth in their insistence upon those values. Holding the values thus tightly, however, what could a prophet conclude but that the Lord is the Lord of all the nations? The idea of the oneness of the Lord put before the prophet in the midst of Israel's distress as a formal doctrine might not have interested him. Put before him as a consequence of his assumptions about the spiritual values of Israel, it would have brought the reply that he must accept any doctrine which would preserve those values at their full worth.

Still, the movement in this direction could not

stop with the nation as the unit. The prophet started from the assumption that material national prosperity was a sign of divine favor. That had to be modified. The modification came through the bold expedient of claiming that evils inflicted upon Israel through reverses at the hands of other nations were also marks of divine favor. Next came the question as to what was the nation. The prophet saw Israelites in swarms who were not interested in any spiritual destiny of Israel. That forced into recognition the doctrine of the remnant. A remnant, however, is a somewhat loose term. Remnants cannot be closely organized. So that finally we reach the individual as the center of the channel through which the highest values are to be revealed.

This emphasis on the individual is one of the outstanding triumphs in the history of religion. Like other such discoveries it was a making explicit what was already implicit in the assumptions of Israel. The prophets were themselves individuals of unforgetable distinctiveness. The early belief in Israel, and the later, for that matter, was that the prophet was an inspired voice of God, that the spirit of the Lord actually spoke through him; but that idea never obscured the realization that the prophet was what he was in himself and on his own account. There was about him an inescapable separateness and

uniqueness. Every one of the greater prophets is altogether different from every other. This inevitably made for a recognition of the distinctiveness of the individual anywhere. What a nation sees in its highest products it desires to see, though in less degree perhaps, in all its members. In Israel the path to prophecy was open to anyone on whom the Spirit of the Lord might fall. So that the possibilities of outstanding distinctness as a prophet were never far from the expectation of Israel about any member of the nation. That is to say, in spite of all we know about schools of prophets, Israel was prepared to believe that any Israelite might at any time appear with a distinctive message from the Lord; a message which would involve the distinctiveness of the Israelite himself. I would not imply that this distinctiveness to any degree cut the prophet off from his people into isolation. The humblest citizen of Israel could regard the most unique of the prophets as a common possession. All that we say about the separateness of the prophet has to be understood against a background of which the corporate worth of the nation was a dominating factor. If we fail to remember this, we shall go altogether astray.

The character and career of the prophets, then, was a force tending toward the exaltation of the individual. Jeremiah is the prophet about whom

we know most, and he and his experience are a priceless possession of Israel and of humanity. So much has been left us of definitely biographical material concerning him that we can see something of the steps by which he attained to his message. In him it is peculiarly true that his insight into the divine came out of his living into deed the revelations of God in human experience. Jeremiah is most divine in the revelations which he brings us at the very hour when he is most human. The change of emphasis in Israel from the nation to the individual certainly came out of his life. Jeremiah lets us feel his consciousness of closeness to God at some moments and of distance from him at others. The intensity of his realization, both of closeness and separation, made him realize also his own distinctiveness as a person and an individual. Jeremiah was not given to theorizing. He had not a large furnishing of what we should call the formal concepts with which to theorize. He was a fiercely burning focus of individual consciousness. He felt himself at times forsaken of God, as when his prophecies about the devastations from the North failed to come true. He was abandoned also by his friends and condemned by the state. He saw the futility of attempts to cleanse Israel of evil by formal religious enactment, such as that which adopted a reformed code and a centralized worship at Jerusalem,

though it is likely that Jeremiah did not take enough into account the ultimate good effect of these measures if they could have had a long time through which to work. The foundation of Jeremiah's consciousness of the importance of the individual was that he felt himself so intensely. It is worth while noting that there are some elements in Jeremiah's thinking which he assumes without question, and which were characteristic of Jewish religion long before Jeremiah's time. He takes for granted his own right to speak directly to the Lord, and to question the Lord, and to express distress at the way the Lord has treated him. If it were not that we have all through the ages likewise accepted this characteristic of Israel's thinking, we should behold in it a spiritual phenomenon of first rank. There was no self-abasement in the attitude of the Israelitish worshiper toward his God. I have mentioned this uniqueness before. I call further attention to it here, because the experience of Jeremiah is so powerful an illustration of the matter-of-factness of the assumption.

Out of the desperate loneliness of the experience of Jeremiah came the vital realization of the separateness of the individual before the Lord. Many and various are the implications tied up in prophetic experiences like that of Jeremiah. If we once get the emphasis on the individual, we have another path opened to uni-

versalism. In addition to the path cut the instant we link all nations, as nations, together as objects of the divine care, we have this other through the importance of the individual, for the moment we get the stress on individuals in their own worth and right the national features fall into the secondary place and men stand on essentially the same plane before God. The differences between individuals do not count as against God's care.

With this central importance of the individual firmly seized we find also the mysterious problem of evil taking on a new form. So far as transgression is concerned the individual becomes liable for his own errors. For a time, after the responsibility of the individual for his own evildoing was recognized, it was held as an article of Jewish orthodoxy that if a man met misfortune, it was a sign of sin, open or secret. The book of Job was written to transform that orthodoxy into a heresy. This book is pertinent to our theme because its moral fervor is thoroughly after the manner of the prophets, Job being painted as a character so righteous in his stand for the truth that he will let the Almighty destroy him rather than admit an accusation which he knows to be false. The rejection of the notion that material misfortune is a sure indication of wrongdoing by the individual raises anew the problem of the responsi-

bility of the Lord for the misfortune of individuals. The book of Job is an attempt to deal with that problem. I do not attempt to classify Job among the prophets, but I do suggest that the rigorous moral sense, the passion for righteousness which so profoundly marks the book of Job is in direct line with the prophetic moral ideals. I may remark in passing that whether the book of Job gives a hint of immortality or not, the exaltation of the individual as the outcome of the forces set to work by the prophets leads sooner or later to the question of immortality, though the prophets themselves did not raise the question.

The point of all that I have been saying in this lecture is that the prophets aided religious progress in another fashion than that of working out long plans for the future. They have been called statesmen, but their mood was not that of statesmanship. They were not adjusters of forces, but the creators, or at least the announcers of moral forces. They created situations and forced issues. In the sphere of religious thinking they never paid attention to what we should call theology, but they supplied the spiritual material of which theology is constructed. The prophet merely spoke out, and made himself and his message facts that could not be pushed to one side or trodden under foot.

The method of the Old Testament prophets

was to proclaim their truth no matter what might happen to themselves or to anyone else. When it comes to apportioning credit for any decisive moral advance, especially when that advance registers itself in a new law, or institution, or policy, the men who finally work out the detailed changes are likely to get the larger share. Nevertheless, the development of the public opinion which is the driving power back of the change is due to the prophet. A recent historical discussion of the overthrow of slavery in the United States declares that the apostles of abolition had no effect in bringing about the result whatever. What the writer has had in mind has probably been the absence of abolitionists of the radical school from the circle of those realists actually putting emancipation into law. He sees the agitators as a set of ill-balanced doctrinaires standing apart from sensible men and shouting their cries about higher morality, as impractical idealists, with no real sense or power worth considering as historically effective, compared with the play of nationalistic and economic forces, for example. We can get some light on a problem like this by remembering that every intelligent person who lived through the days of the struggle remembers the agitators and what they said, that readers of a later day do not cease to be impressed with the directness with which the abolitionists stated the fundamental

issue. We cannot leave them out in any attempt to master the significance of the anti-slavery struggle. They dealt with those imponderables which may not be mentioned by the lawmakers, but which are the heaviest weights in the whole problem. Over a half century ago a leading commercial and industrial leader in the United States was fighting strenuously against certain reforms which men whom he considered radicals were urging. The public opinion aroused by the radicals in the end forced the adoption of the reforms. Years after a biographer, writing the life of this leader, discovered to his amazement that the industrialist claimed that he had introduced the reforms himself, and took all the credit therefor. The industrialist had put the reforms into final form, under pressure of the aroused moral demands of the time, the pressure due in the first instance to prophetic utterance. It was probably a hundred years before the ideas of Amos found their way into the law and customary practice of Israel, but that does not lessen the importance of the prophet.

The duty of the prophet is thus to arouse the sentiment of a time in behalf of increased moral devotion. This effect on public opinion is the essential. We may mention also that one effect of prophecy is often to force the enemies of the moral ideal into the open, to make them declare themselves, if not in speech at least in action.

It is sometimes said that moral evils in a social community destroy themselves by their own follies. This often comes about through the self-revelation of the forces of evil due to prophetic pressure. Politics, we are told, makes strange bedfellows. What drives the enemies of the truth into close union and fellowship is often their common hatred of the prophet.

This, then, is the duty of the prophet—to force moral issues into public attention and to keep them there. The prophet is not to blame for not thinking of anything other than the message itself. He does not consider even the timeliness of his message. Others may have to take such consideration into account, but he sees the message and that alone.

I have sought to guard the thought of the individuality of the prophet, who illustrates the paradox that the proclaimer of the moral principles according to which society is to live must be a lonely figure. The man most concerned for the multitudes may have to spend much of his time in the desert. He is seeking in solitude to get hold of ideals everywhere valid. The paradox further makes the intensely personal prophet almost impersonal as a social force. Some of the prophets, like Elijah, seem almost as elementary as a thunderstorm or an earthquake—all of them are elemental in their understanding of the primary moral needs of men.

VII

THE PERILS OF PROPHECY

It is not possible to appreciate fully the service of the prophet without looking at some of the perils of prophecy. This will give us also an approach to further understanding of the relation of the prophet to the church.

At the beginning of this discussion let us realize that the prophet is not in himself likely to be a gracious and winsome personality. His individualistic temper sets him apart from men to start with, and he seldom makes complete adjustment to the conventional requirements in the fashions and manners of his time. John the Baptist was clad in camel's hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins, and his food was locusts and wild honey. No doubt this garb and this diet were expressions of John's own distinctive self. He probably did not think anything about what he wore or what he ate. Nevertheless, he was enough different in these details to cause the writer of the Gospels to describe and record his peculiarities for the after ages.

A distinguished leader in social thinking in our day once advised his pupils that if they felt any tendencies to what they conceived of as

radical prophetic utterance, they should be as conventional as possible in every minor item of their conduct. If it were not too severe a strain on their impulses of self-expression to look like their fellows, and act like their fellows, he advised conventionality in the ordinary contacts. Back of this half-humorous counsel was a sound understanding. If the proclaimer of a message is genuinely expressing his own sincere life, he ought indeed not be asked to do anything which will make him feel that he is not fully acting as himself. There is a subtle temptation, however, from which the most sincere prophet may not be exempt, especially after he begins to meet ferocity in opposition. He may almost unconsciously to himself take a secret pride in even the outer show of separateness, in gestures of no consequence as compared with the weight of his message, but of enough consequence to distract attention from that message. For the notion that radicals are all wild and crazy the radicals are themselves somewhat to blame—and they are to blame not always because of the content of their message itself but for incidental features which suggest the erratic. There was something of this in the Old Testament prophets, though peculiarities fitted more naturally into an Oriental atmosphere than they ever could into ours. The Eastern mind takes hospitably to what might seem to the Western bizarre and ex-

travagant. On the whole, however, it is more and more surprising to note how thoroughly the Hebrew prophets kept themselves to forms of expression which are regarded as soberly impressive through all later ages.

The duty of the prophet is to keep his radicalism prophetic, or moral. I have been trying to say all along that it is the function of prophecy to keep religion moral. That includes the making of the manner of prophetic utterance moral. the prophet has to moralize radicalism, for the sake of the truth itself. The radical temper predominates in some persons and there are tendencies to radicalism in most of us. The temper has to be utilized for the advance of the Kingdom. The church has always been slow to learn the moral obligation of making moral the methods by which we work toward good ends. There have been times when church leaders have tacitly approved, or at least have accepted the results of, bad means which have led to good ends. To this day this is the only serious argument for war. To this day, also, not enough attention has been paid to the need of a fully ethical method in the radical presentation of a religious message. One difficulty with radicalism is that it tends to wholesaleness. If a radical gives himself to headlong expression for his favorite ideal in one direction, he is likely to tend to be equally headlong in all directions.

He meets coolness or indifference inside his church group, it may be, and then fairly flings himself outside. Once outside he feels free to disregard inhibitions that might have been effective inside, and after a time may cut loose from all customary morality whatsoever. By a converse process those who are outside of religious groups altogether, with no interest in anything except giving free rein and vent to whatever enters their heads—or their nerves—may occasionally serve a religious cause by being radical in a direction of a genuine human right. The radical fervor for a cause tends to rush out through every opening. Some of the openings have to be closed up because, even if they do not lead to evil, they detract from the power of the utterance sweeping through a main channel.

The obligation upon the prophet is to make himself understood, if that is at all possible. To be sure, the prophet ought not be held responsible for supplying either the intelligence or the moral disposition to hearers which will understand prophetic messages, but he may be responsible if he misrepresents the truth. He may not be disturbed at the danger of being misunderstood personally, but he has an obligation to the truth itself. It must be exasperating to a leader of genuinely prophetic spirit to have friends and enemies alike so explaining his words as to take the fire out of them, but, on the other hand, it is

disheartening to lovers of good causes to hear them so overstated as to reveal that the prophet is out of touch with everything substantially real. The Old Testament prophets help us enormously in this respect. They dealt with themes whose discussion aroused the wrath of the most powerful interests of their day. There were no such organized groups of evildoers then as now, but there were "understandings" a-plenty. Greed of money and power was fully as intense then as now; popular prejudices and mass-inertia fully as real. Yet the words of the prophets which drove the enemies of righteousness to fury leave little to be apologized for. If we go away back to the beginnings of prophecy that sought to deal with moral issues and listen to Elijah taunting the priests of Baal, what do we hear? Extravagant abuse? The narrative indeed goes on to tell of the horrible butchery of the priests under the leadership of the prophet himself. We are reading here of dreadful times. The earlier prophets were men of their times and the times were grim. All the more reason, then, why we should expect unbridled vituperation without any regard to facts whatever. What do we hear? We catch through all the sarcasm an exact phrasing of the nature of Baal, according to the teaching of the Baal priests. Call louder! Cut yourselves more deeply! Perhaps your god is asleep, or on a journey! Now, the words of the

prophet most likely to be recorded are those that impressed his hearers most powerfully. There can be no doubt as to the impression which Elijah produced and as to justice of that impression. The whole indictment of the Baal-worship is here. The god as indifferent to men except as his attention is compelled by some sensational sacrifice, especially a bloody offering which appeals to the cruel instincts of the alleged deity—all this is not a caricature of the Baal heathenism, but a portraiture to the life. Even if it be replied that Elijah also appears as a man of blood, the counter-answer is that Elijah did not represent his Lord as delighting in blood. Even if Elijah announced a horrible penalty upon Ahab he proclaimed that the penalty might be lessened by righteous conduct.

We stand before an almost incomprehensible moderation of statement as we listen to the old prophets. They understate rather than overstate. When they make an accusation against a ruler or a people, they speak in accents of justice. Those who found false scales one of the customary moral abominations were careful not to use false scales or bad weights in their speech. The licentiousness which accompanied the worship of the gods of fertility must have roused the utmost horror in the souls of the prophets, but the prophets characterize the evil for what it is and in the fewest possible strokes.

In a word, the prophets were careful not to yield to the temptation of making their statements for purely instrumental purposes without regard to fact. Perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that the prophets never felt any such temptation. The truth at which they were aiming so filled their field of view that they saw nothing but that truth.

We are living in a day when instrumentalism is a charmed word. According to a popular school of philosophy our views of life and the world are to be held for whatever of value in life-experience they bring us. We are not always supposed to raise much question as to whether the views root deeply in factual reality or not. If we find that our conceptions are false, we are supposed to give them up. Truth or falsity themselves, though, are to be judged chiefly by serviceableness. Now, we need only a moment's reflection to see just what happens when we carry this philosophy far enough into its implications to make it a rule for speech. Then statements become too instrumental and are effective not so much because of the truth they reveal as because of the results they produce.

We gladly concede that one of the useful accents in present psychological study is on the functions which speech serves apart from its content. It used to be said that speech was an invention for the communication of thought. We

realize to-day, however, that it is not always an invention, does not always communicate, and may have no more than the slightest relation to thought. It is more spontaneous than the word "invention" suggests; it may be self-relief rather than communication; it may voice emotion rather than rational conception. Moreover, a literal lie may aid a spiritual truth, we are told. The main aim should be to get our hearers to act as if our words were true. According to current teaching, prophets are voices of protest against evil conditions. They are emotional explosions called forth by the outrage of genuine human values through the institutions under which we live. They are not to be judged, it appears, by the ordinary standards of truth-telling.

There is enough in what passes as modern prophecy to give plausibility to this contention. For illustration we may cite Wendell Phillips, of the anti-slavery crusade, intellectually speaking, at least, the most richly endowed and highly trained of the abolitionists that battled for the advance of the cause of freedom. Of the personal sincerity of Phillips there can be no question. He sacrificed too much, encountered danger too often, to leave any doubts as to his unselfish devotion to his cause. Yet it is hard to resist the conclusion in reading the speeches of Phillips that he is giving himself to almost wholly instrumental utterance without

much regard to whether he is speaking fact or not. Statements about men and events are badly askew. Phillips himself said that the most direct way to arouse public opinion is through attack on the idols of the people. Chief among the idols in a social group like ours are the leaders whom the people follow. Therefore the sound method is attack on the leaders. Something can be said for this if the attack is centered on policies more than upon personalities. Even a superficial reading of Phillips, however, will reveal how far astray he went, in his fury of invective, from the facts and from the proprieties which are supposed to govern human speech. There is in Phillips a passion for human values beyond all praise, though he forgot some of the human values in his opponents as he fought for the human values of the Negroes. He recklessly slashed at the good name of all who dared challenge him. Even more serious, however, was the disregard of fact in invective. One misfortune here was that such emotional ejaculation set the standard of much attempted prophetic utterance in later American history. In reading the most extreme utterances of the biblical prophets, on the other hand, we cannot escape an impression of reality. Our feet are on the ground. When the prophets speak of outrage upon the human values, their concrete illustrations seem genuine and typical. Their speech is indeed un-

forgettably vivid, but the vividness lights up fact and not the extravagances of an imagination going "on its own." The power of their denunciation is in its directness. The passages about joining house to house till there be no place, about selling the needy for a pair of shoes, about "chasing wine till wine chase them," about righteousness as a plumb line, about making an idol of wood and with the left-overs building a fire—all this is at once picturesque and precise. In a word, he who would follow the ancient prophets must have a properly developed instinct for fact.

I admit that it is almost impossible to handle justly this phase of my problem. We have so misused some good old English words that it is almost futile to employ them in a discussion such as this and not be misunderstood—for example, "sane" and "sound." These terms have in our day been so completely appropriated—I was about to say "confiscated"—by all schools of reactionaries that we cannot well use them in speaking of the prophetic need of balance and poise. In such use we are likely to be misunderstood, as if we were trying to "tone the prophets down." So we turn paradoxical and say that, after all, the sanity and poise and balance of the prophet are often shown in what are apparently the most extravagant actions. A sailor on a boat threatening to capsize might seem to be a maniac

because of his desperate shoutings to the passengers of orders to be obeyed at once, yet he would be literally acting out of a sensitiveness of balance. Balance as deliberate and carefully prepared utterance would in such a crisis be a mark of lunacy. So all we can say is that the prophet needs to deepen his understanding of all the forces we can think of as real, and that while we hold that the ideal is soundest reality, we call upon the prophet to be sure that he has made his selections of real forces to be supported or attacked with as much discernment and perspective as he can summon. The passages in the Scripture which open to us glimpses of how close the prophets lived to nature tend to give us confidence in their judgment and in their wholeness of moral health when they declaim against the evils which accompanied the artificial living of their day.

Another peril of the prophet is that he may slacken his grip or his fundamental principle amid the abundance of concrete calls to human helpfulness that may divert him. It was once charged against a great prophet that he cared so much for humanity that he lost sight of men. It is always possible for a prophet to become so impersonal as to appear like a creature of inhumanity, but the danger is more acute in the opposite direction. A balance must needs be struck between interest in men and interest in

humanity, but we must not forget that it is quite as hazardous to lose sight of humanity as of men. The Old Testament prophet, we must never get tired of saying, lived for the actual human values of actual men in his own time, but he never lost sight of the farther reaches in the pressure of the immediately near in his field of view. In a period of starvation a farmer must indeed keep at hand enough grain to preserve the lives of his children, but he must not too heavily break into his store of seed wheat. The prophets had to face a similar duty. They had to declare immediate needs, but they had also to speak out of the long view that could minister to the morrow as well. In our modern church life there is a peril to the prophetic spirit in the human demands that must be met here and now. A minister in a large parish may have to face the duty that Jesus met—that of apparently abandoning those in distress for the sake of proclaiming the higher ideal to which he has set himself. Sometimes the plight is more disturbing still. The proclamation of a prophetic ideal may make worse the immediate plight of those whom the prophet is seeking to aid. It has now and again happened that a prophetic appeal for the relief of a desperate situation as to slavery has made conditions worse through increasing the severity in the treatment of slaves. Agitation for better conditions for wage-earners has not seldom

caused the wage-earners themselves to be subjected to heavier disciplines and restrictions.

Again, there is the danger of the prophet's getting away from the central task of proclamation of his ideal in the attractiveness of the ramifications into which that ideal leads. Was it not Robertson Smith who said that one idea was enough to make a Hebrew prophet? In any event, now that the centuries have passed, we see that each of the greater prophets did stand for just one central idea. Even in careers like those of Isaiah and Jeremiah, which ran through long periods, we discover a singular consistency in the fundamental points of view. Isaiah might advise one course at one national crisis and another later, but the sacredness of Jerusalem because of the spiritual value of Jerusalem's ideal for the world was always central. All through the story of Jeremiah we see developing the conception of an inner righteousness of the individual which was to be the basis of a new covenant.

Here we come upon the need of guarding against professionalism in prophecy. Professionalism in our use of the term was not such a peril in ancient Israel as to-day, but it was measurably prevalent, certainly, with priests and to a degree with prophets. We cannot miss the note of scorn in the avowal of Amos that he was neither a prophet nor a son of a prophet. There were

prophets at the courts of kings—probably persons of unusual powers of inducing either highly excited nervous states in themselves, or even trancelike unconsciousness—states seeming to reveal the presence of divinity. In the earlier days of prophecy in almost all nations the prophet was believed by the onlookers to be visited by an actual god, or to be given something by a god, which made his utterances valid. So the professional prophets came to think of the unusual nervous experience as validating their messages. It required the teaching and example of the later moral and spiritual leaders to get Israel away from this notion. It was much easier for an official prophet to work himself into a frenzy than it was for him to proclaim a message of self-evident moral validity.

There is no lineal survival of exactly the old professionalism of the prophet among us to-day, but there is something like it. After a prophet has led in one moral advance he is likely to continue in something of the glow of the radical after he has finished with his original cause. He may feel that he has a right still to speak in the same stern tones, with the same intensity of passion as in the days of stupendous crisis. This may involve all loss of proportion. Referring again to the anti-slavery conflict we can point to incidents that would have been ridiculous if they had not been so tragic: when after the anti-

slavery battle had been supposedly won and the slaves at least set free, some of the powerful orators of the struggle cast about for other causes for which to fight. One of the most distinguished threw himself with all his radical ardor into what was known as the Greenback agitation—the demand for cheap currency to be printed just about as rapidly as the people clamored for it. There can be little doubt that the movement toward the gold standard in the early seventies did entail hardship and injustice on many debtors. There was, however, something incongruous in the frantic invective that put the gold standard about on the same plane as the fugitive slave law of the days just before the war. In the one case human elements having to do with right and wrong were clearly discernible, and in the other a tangled and intricate economic web of causes and consequences was blindly woven and interwoven. So that while the ordinary intelligence could see that there were some human values involved in the Greenback issue, invective did not help much. The agitator knew only one set of prophetic tactics, but realized that he could not well use for a debate on currency the war-harness with which he had waged effective battle for the emancipation of the slaves. Still, the outcome was better in the career of his prophet than in that of those abolitionists who were so disorganized

by their victory that they looked upon the Southern States as a legitimate field for godly plunder. Those reconstruction days are indeed sad chapters in the history of the aftermath of prophecy.

It all comes down in the end to the prophet's keeping himself steady before simple moral issues —a wrong to be righted, an ideal to be exalted, a new conception of God to be proclaimed; on the other hand, a technical and detailed scheme to be handled by another stamp of leader. One of the surest ways for the prophet to lose his power as a prophet is to consent to attempt to work out his own insights into social machinery. It is too often true that the quickest path by which a radical can be transformed into a conservative is to shoulder him with an official responsibility. The official responsibility is the duty of someone else. It is the responsibility of the prophet to keep alive the ideal. If he turns aside to attempt social reconstruction himself, he is likely to be disillusioned. He is at his best when he is confronting men who are avowedly his enemies. He does not fare comfortably with those who are friendly enough to his cause but who seem to him devious in their ways. The ways may not be devious, but they seem so to the prophet. In the end he feels defrauded, or made game of, and falls into sulkiness or sourness. Then invective,

be it ever so eloquent, falls into common scolding, scolding expressed with force and directness, it may be, but scolding nevertheless. Probably Robertson Smith had it right—one good cause is enough for one prophet. And better have him go down in defeat with one blazing statement of truth, than to linger along trying to get his utterances into law or custom by the method of the more adroit manager of men and things.

Still further, the genuine prophet always accepts responsibility for his utterance, and is measurably prepared to face unpleasant consequences. I certainly do not wish to be interpreted as withdrawing what I said in an earlier chapter about the folly of persecuting prophets. The most uneconomical use of prophets is to stone them, or to block their utterances. I do not retract one word of what I have said about the need of allowing the prophet to speak and of heeding what he says. Nevertheless, the prophet would better understand something of his obstacles at the outset. His career is not one which offers many of the inducements of this present world. Even if there is no persecution whatever, if the prophecies are uttered in a community of complete tolerance, the outlook is not easy or pleasing. The messages are bound to be unpopular. There is no other way. If the prophet sees that the people have fallen off from or are

blind to a moral ideal, he need not think that they will be pleased at his proclamation of the fact. If he is calling on them for a fresh moral advance, he has to reckon with the intellectual and ethical inertia, or the sheer spiritual sluggishness of the community. He cannot himself continue in one stay. As soon as the people begin to accept his teaching, or to work it into fact, he must move on ahead to its further implications. The only gratification he is likely to get is that of his responding to the inner compulsion itself, and whatever sweetness there may be in that consciousness is tinctured with bitterness. Even the joys of ordinary social intercourse are for him limited indeed. There are not many persons in whose society he takes comfort, and not many who take comfort in him. Occasionally a prophet is likable enough if one can get to know him, but there is not much chance of knowing him. If he does form friendships, he has at any moment to lay these to one side.

Moreover, the prophet seldom sees anything more than a partial fulfillment of his prophecy, or a limited acceptance of his message. Jeremiah at times spoke as if the Lord who had given him his message had made a fool of him. We can adjust ourselves to all this readily enough by saying that these men were shaping an ideal for the after-ages. That is indeed what they were doing, but that is not what they supposed

they were doing. Most of those who pictured an age of peace between nations never could have foreseen that, after twenty-five centuries, war between nations would be a more desperate reality than in their own day! It would almost seem as if in this world of ours no large-scale social dreams come true within a short enough period to make their triumph of any particular significance in the life of the prophet himself. Let us go back once more to the anti-slavery struggle. With the emancipation victory and the enactment of freedom into the Constitution of the country it was assumed that the victory for freedom had been won. I keep recurring to this particular reform movement because, in the opinion of so many who talk and write, it seems so complete in itself. So far as the formal legal enactment was concerned the victory was complete. Yet who could look at the Negro in the United States to-day and feel that any complete victory had been won? Prophets seldom win victories as decisive as they had hoped. Elijah's victory over the priests of Baal rang in Israelitish story through the centuries, but how final was that victory? Nearly enough final to help Israel past a fearful crisis, but not decisive enough to wipe out baal-worship. When Jeremiah was pouring out his complaints more than two hundred years later the people of Israel were still worshiping baals. It is probable that

idolatry in Israel did not entirely cease till after the exile. The proclamation of truth came to be, with some of the prophets, a proclamation indeed without regard to consequences, not merely with indifference to what the consequences might be, but without concern as to whether there might be any consequences. Strange to say, this uncertainty as to definite results did not seem to chill the fire of utterance. The prophets seem to have felt definite messages to be spoken and they spoke them, regardless of whether the effect was good, bad, or indifferent—or nothing. There is an oft-quoted text in the book of Daniel which in three words throws a flood of light on this phase of prophetic temper. The Hebrew children in the story are facing death in the fiery furnace, but can go scot free if they will bow down and worship according to official directions. Their defiant reply is that the God of Israel is able to deliver his followers even from a fiery furnace and that therefore they will not bow down. Now came the eloquent words: *But if not,* they will not bow down in any event. While these words are not specifically those of a prophet, they are genuinely prophetic. A peril of prophecy is that the prophet will not reflect long enough upon the significance of "But if not." Some graduates of Yale will long remember a baccalaureate sermon by the late President Hadley on that text—*But if not.*

The prophet has to encounter contempt and rage, as long as these undesirable tempers are likely to be evoked. The prophet is the best force against contempt and rage. When I spoke in an earlier chapter of utilizing the prophet's utterance advantageously, I certainly did not expect to exempt prophets from the pain of dealing with the desperate stubbornness of human nature in its hankering after moral evils, or, to speak more charitably, after the lesser moral goods. We cannot imagine any special exemption from hardship for prophets. He has to stand out in front in hand-to-hand battle. For illustration let us note the plight of a conscientious objector against war during time of war. Anybody can be a conscientious objector against war between wars. I think it is social loss to imprison conscientious objectors during wartime, or to forbid them to speak. They will, however, have to face the consequence of their speech. At the moment other men are going forth to battle—and battle under modern conditions is the sum of all abominations—it is not to be expected that a prophet refusing to fight on conscientious grounds will have an easy time. To be sure, there are always what C. E. Montague used to call unconscientious objectors who escape fighting and may possibly achieve honor at the same time—the unconscientious objector being the man who is averse to exposing his own skin to

peril, and who secures place, beribboned and bemedaled, in which he is in no danger. If a man is averse to fighting, according to the example of the unconscientious objector, let him secure some non-fighting post from which he can denounce slackers vehemently and retire after the war with votes of thanks for distinguished service. This, however, is not the prophetic type. There is a good deal of justice in the feeling that if a prophet is to denounce war, he must take at least as many risks as do those who give themselves to battle in sincere belief in war. There are altogether too many in every society who fancy that their prophetic impulse is adequately discharged in writing or speaking, whether their utterance comes out of living grapple with evils which in any degree exact payment or not. I mean some payment heavier than the strain of writing an editorial or a sermon.

Once more the prophet is in danger of forgetting that he is not the only factor in religious society. I think we must put the prophet at the center of the wheel, but he is not the whole circle and circumference. Consider again the function of the genuine priest. Part of that function is to conserve the moral and spiritual forces which the prophet generates and releases. Ritualistic worship, properly conceived, aims at institutionally gathering up for daily use the insights and emotions which arise from the

prophet's moral activities. No matter how self-sufficient and self-evidencing the message of the prophet may be, no matter how sweeping the enthusiasm finally evoked by his heroism, the results fade out unless someone takes it in hand to conserve them in law, or custom, or ceremonial. This priestly work naturally seems tame. The energies of the prophet are like rushing mountain torrents. They must in the end, however, be canalized. Now, of all the features of a landscape imaginable, dams and conduits and canals are the least interesting. Yet it is through these that the fields are fertilized, the wheels turned, and the ships floated. It is impressive—when we stop to reflect—to see how thoroughly the priestly servants of the church have made the lives of prophetic saints effective long after those saints are gone. Merely by recalling the names of such leaders, and repeating their words, and reciting their deeds, the priest passes on the prophet's power to after ages. The prophet himself, if he could return to earth, might think the priests ineffective beyond all description, but he might, if he looked long enough, come to a different opinion. The prophets of the Old Testament can be counted on one's ten fingers. Just because there were not more of them they would have been forgotten if priests, or those like the priests, had not husbanded all the prophetic wisdom they could

garner. The commonplaceness of prophetic teaching after a generation is due not only to the original vigor of the teaching itself, to the force with which the first proclaimers of the truth drove it into the consciousness of scores of ecclesiastical leaders, but to the patience in repetition of those leaders who could never themselves have made the original discovery or the first statement. Truth uttered, no matter how prophetically, does not propagate itself through the air. It must be incessantly brooded over and repeated again and again. The prophet lives only an ordinary lifetime. If no follower takes it on himself to see that the words are transmitted to the after-generations, the words will not be transmitted. The history of the Jews is one long commentary on the effective method of handing down prophetic utterance. Line upon line and precept upon precept by priests followed the first outbursts of the prophets. Even the extreme doctrines of documentary inspiration served a useful purpose—in spite of the literalism to which they gave rise. They insured that the words were preserved in fairly accurate form for generation after generation. Perhaps all the priestly methods that seem to us of to-day mistaken had for their original aim, at least in part, the preservation of the religious goods of the past. I repeat that no one of us needs to be told the danger here. Jesus spoke with terrible

directness about building tombs to the dead prophets while stoning their living successors. It is not to be concluded, however, that Jesus condemned honoring the dead prophets. In thus giving honor even the hypocrites did something to keep alive the truth for which the prophets had labored. It is altogether too easy to make a flourish and condemn outright those who worship the past. There were indeed in the time of Jesus, and there have always been since, insincere souls who praise the dead prophets and stone the living, but there are other souls admittedly backward but nevertheless sincere who devotedly worship the past. Such souls never consider what Amos and Isaiah and Jeremiah would say if they were alive to-day, but it is worth something to have them so thoroughly reverent toward what the prophets did say in the old time

Again, the prophet is in peril of not reckoning at anywhere near full value the service of the priest in personal ministrations. We rightly give honor to prophets like Elijah for implying the worth of the individual, and to those like Jeremiah and Ezekiel for clearly preaching that worth, but we should not forget that the priests had been acting upon the assumption of the value of the individual from the dawn of the day when priestly functions were first performed. Their practice was significant even if they never

gave an hour to theoretical reflection upon its assumptions or implications. Men as individuals have always been getting into plights in which priests could serve them, and they have always sought the services of priests. Even in those days when there was no sharp emphasis on separate existence as apart from the existence of the group, when the person took his value from membership in the group and saw as his whole duty response to the calls of the group, the individuals did their living as individuals.

By the most inevitable of human contacts, by the most inescapable of human needs, men have as individuals sought help in physical and spiritual anguish wherever they have thought they could find it. They have not waited for the clearing up of theoretical or abstract notions. If they have believed that priests, or those discharging priestly functions, could be of help to them, they have sought for the help. In the nature of the situations the help thus rendered could never become wide public knowledge, as compared with the activity of prophets.

This aspect of church life, this personal ministry which, whether it takes the form of the distinctively priestly or not, is essentially priestly, is one of the most important of the forces shaping the Christian world at any time. It is a ministry which cannot adequately be brought within the range of description or even of report. One

who knows anything at all about the work of a church in a community is aware that the personal contacts made by ministers are among the most potent agencies for the spread of religious life. We hear much to-day about relief of inner personal distress by talking over the distress with a friend. The quantity of such anguished utterance to ministers is beyond estimate. I must urge that there is no way of the public's finding out the extent of service rendered in this fashion.

Again, the volume of preaching that is not especially original is of mighty consequence for religious advance. This preaching is of value just because it is not original. Its virtue is that it states accepted truth more effectively than the people could phrase it themselves, not that it is truth which the people never have thought of. One genuinely prophetic idea will last the ordinary congregation a long, long period, for such an idea becomes fully intelligible to most minds only after seasons of brooding reflection by the hearers and elaborate comment by interpreters. The prophet seldom makes either a good pastor or a good regular minister. Both pastor and minister must persistently look out through the eyes of those with whom they have to labor. The prophet looks through his own eyes.

It may not be far amiss to say that the chief

peril of prophecy is a proneness to underestimate or underrate the masses of those whom we call the plain people. Here, again, we have somewhat of a paradox. The whole result of prophetic speech and deed is to exalt the human values, and yet that speech itself often shows despair of the masses of men, if not contempt for them. Elijah got it into his head that he was the only one in all the land true to the Lord. It required a divine revelation, according to the narrative, to convince Elijah that there were seven thousand who had not bowed down the knee to Baal. Who were the seven thousand? The plain people of the time living the kind of life that would in the end redeem and deliver Canaan from the baals. It was almost miraculous—this round number—in a land where farmers everywhere heard that the crops would not grow unless the baals were pleased. Seven thousand people were teaching just by refusing to honor the baals that the baals were of no potency. No matter how many baal-worshipers there were, the presence of seven thousand non-worshipers meant in the end the triumph over the baals. If one farmer indifferent to the gods succeeded now and then, the worshipers might have thought the success due to accident. The gods might not care for one lone individual indifferent to them. With seven thousand, though, ignoring the claims of the false deities a different problem would forth-

with arise. Seven thousand getting along without bowing down the knee to Baal would constitute an embarrassing commentary on Baalism. If seven thousand could get along thus, why not seventy thousand? Elijah saw the enormities of Baalism so definitely that he could see nothing else. His was a characteristic fault of the prophetic mood.

Or take that other prophetic word, that despairing wail of Isaiah about the popular mind as gross, so that his speech seemed to make the eyes blind and the ears deaf. That was the way it seemed to Isaiah, but some heard, notwithstanding.

The prophet has difficulty in appraising shadings of character in the common people. To him everything is black or white, but human beings in the mass are seldom black or white. They are not gray, but they are white in part and black in part. In laboring with human beings we are not having to do with finished products. As a wise philosopher once said we have in men not animalism on the one hand or angelhood on the other, but beings passing out of markedly animal states to states resembling angelhood. Now, this in-betweenness is a terrific strain on the prophetic temper. There is not enough sharpness of edge about it. It suggests halfwayness and compromise. The prophet is on the search for all-one-thing or all-the-other, which

cannot be found. The binding moral requirement is that men shall show good will, but what good will may call for at this or that juncture is a baffling question. The prophet desires answers to be Yes or No—the particular duty to be as clear as the law of good will. The mass of people have to make adjustments in order to get along, the overwhelming majority of that mass being for the most part well-intentioned. The prophet cries out that justice is to be done though the heavens fall, and the masses have a sound instinct that if justice brings the heavens down, it is not substantially justice.

The extent to which mutually contradictory opinions can find comfortable lodgment side by side in one and the same consciousness is a never-failing enigma to students of human nature. Any careful student is aware that these contradictions do not necessarily imply hypocrisy. Mixed motives indeed prevail in human life, but not much hypocrisy. A man may be well developed on one side of his moral character and not developed at all at another. This contradictoriness is a fearful stumbling block to the prophet.

In fine, the trials of the prophet often come out of his inability to reckon with human nature in the flesh, in the imperfections and one-sidednesses and shortcomings which reveal the earthiness of the vessel in which all moral treasures

are carried. It is the age-old contradiction between the splendor of the ideal and the squalor of the conditions which at the best are a miserable setting for the ideal.

A considerable element of prophetic criticism fails to remind itself that in a church we have to do virtually with a cross-section of a community of a given time. We meet the same varieties of human beings in ecclesiastical as in all other social relationships. Many a prophet seems somehow to feel that a church is an organization standing apart from the usual channels of human experience. What is the church on the human side? It is a group, or groups, of human beings acting with religious aims. Now, large proportions of the church groups to-day, or in any day, are composed of the same persons as work in industrial and social and political groups. The individual acting as a member of a church group is, as I said earlier, possibly acting differently from the way he would act merely as an individual by himself. He may vote, as a member of a church council, for an ideal to which he might not be willing to subscribe merely as an individual, and he votes because he believes the church should stand for ideals in the exercise of its power of collective prophecy. Now, this individual votes a week or two later as a member of a political party whose platform and practices are far from ideal. As an indi-

vidual he is more than half-ashamed of being counted as a Republican, or a Democrat, or a Socialist. As an individual he is better than his party. A little later we may find this same churchman voting for a decidedly reactionary measure in an industrial Board of Directors, a measure which he does not approve, but which he accedes to as the best course possible under all the circumstances. It is easy to imagine how impatient a paragraph like this of mine would make a man of the prophetic temper. The prophet's first impulse is to call upon the church to come out from the world and be separate. What does that mean? Does it mean physical separateness, the church thenceforward acting as a self-contained group by itself? That has been tried time and again, always with failure, for the religious group inevitably has to come into relations with outside groups. If it seeks to find a place where it can be absolutely alone, it can find no such place. If it limits itself industrially to buying raw materials and selling finished products, it must meet the whole question of commercial fairness and justice. How can it justify itself in buying from or selling to the outside world by the world's own standards? Where is it to win its converts? Merely by the religious training of those born into its own circle? That surrenders an appallingly large part of the Christian task at once. Moreover,

the children born inside the circle may take to asking questions which lead to disruption of a tightly closed group. The common sense of the church takes the attitude that the separateness from the world has to be distinctiveness of aim and spirit, that the ideals of the church must be carried into all the other groups by Christians who labor in the groups, that practically the message of the prophet has to be wrought into expression fragment by fragment. If the conflict between the prophet and the people becomes intense, someone will ask the prophet whether he ever makes factual adjustments to matter-of-fact predicaments or not, and finally points out that the prophet's message itself never contains all the truth, and insists that the prophet cannot mingle with men at all without taking an attitude of compromise somewhere which is short of the prophetic ideal.

Still, I admit that the prophet ought not to trouble himself overmuch about such queries. He does best to make his message uncompromising. The hearers will put in the qualifications in abundance. It would be more intelligible if we could regard it as a phenomenon in the realm of spiritual physics, the utterances of the prophet being looked upon as so much energy directed toward the movement of so much mass in the popular mind.

Finally, the prophet must never forget that

the popular mind gives him his chance, through supplying the possibility at least of aroused attention and awakened moral demand. It is the popular mind out of which social atmospheres are sustained. A distinguished church historian, speaking to a group of theological students, recently said that he could not see that the masses of the church members had ever done much to shape religious thinking or activity, that the masses merely follow this or that leader without troubling to do much thinking themselves, the reason presumably being that organizational religious matters do not affect large groups of men as do political concerns. Professor Rudolf Kittel, who has written one of the most important histories of the people of Israel, declares that the progress of history is due to the efforts of outstanding individuals more than to anything else. It may be just as well for us to reflect upon judgments like this in an age which has gone to such lengths as has ours in eulogy of democracy. Nevertheless, the people play their part. They may not do much leading on religious issues, but they surely can do some determined and even desperate following. Religious conflicts, whether as physical warfare or theological debate, have awakened as tremendous popular response as have any enthusiasms in human history. It is the popular demand which in the end determines whether the religious

cause shall stand or fall. The people can only say "Yes" or "No," but that is an enormous power. In all moral progress we are like children at that old game in which questions are put and the only answers permissible are "Yes" and "No." The one answering has in mind a definite object which the questioner is trying to discover. It is surprising how quickly the truth can thus be arrived at. We are "like" children at that game—but not quite. The prophet declares his message without regard to consequences. He does not wait to see whether the response is "Yes" or "No." It may be—probably is—"No" at first. The final victory of the prophet, however, comes with the answering "Yes" of the people.

The genuine prophet does not need discussions such as this about his peril. He is what he is. We write for the guidance of those who do the saying "Yes" or "No." Almost all the faults of prophecy are inevitable and inherent. They come out of unresponsiveness of the people. The prophet does not plan to be one-sided or extreme. He does not recognize his own radicalism. Unconsciously to himself he is forced to extremities by the toughness of the obstacles which he meets. It is a mistake to say anything which takes the edge off his speech. Still, there are prophets and prophets, some genuine and some not so genuine. We cannot always tell the

real from the false, except that the real always show the marks of deep moral sincerity. Wherever that moral passion burns on prophetic lips we listen at our own peril, not chiefly the peril of saying "Yes" to some wild and dangerous fallacy, but that of saying "No" to what, with all its limitations of balance and temper, may be a veritable revelation from that divine morality which we believe to be at the heart of things.

VIII

JESUS AND PROPHECY

We come at last to think of Jesus in relation to our general theme. The church has from its beginning given Jesus the title of prophet. Suppose we look for a little at Jesus as carrying on the work of a prophet at a definite crisis in Israel's life rather than as a teacher of religious truth in what we might conceive of as more general fashion. I acknowledge my indebtedness in this chapter to Professor Bacon, of Yale University.

What brought Jesus to his death? The Christian has so often thought of Christ as playing a tragic rôle in a stupendous world-drama—or universe-drama, for that matter—that he has not always deemed it worth while to ask much about the actual reasons for the hatred in men's hearts which drove Jesus inevitably toward death. We usually say that the Jews were so blind that they hounded Jesus to death through ignorance. The word from the cross, "Forgive them; for they know not what they do," has seemed to us an adequate judgment on the entire dreadful course of events. There was something maddening to sinful men, we say, in the presence itself

of goodness like that of Jesus. The murderers of Jesus did not themselves realize just what spirit they were of.

The longer we think about this explanation, the more question it raises. It is doubtful if what we might call goodness in general, or a good spirit in Jesus, could arouse such raging opposition from what we might call an evil disposition in general. The course of events must be interpreted more concretely than this.

Was it the teaching of Jesus that aroused wrath against him? Surely not all of the teaching. If the church were to pick out the elements of the teaching of Jesus which are most distinctive, it would likely choose the parables, and of the parables it would almost certainly put that of the prodigal son in the highest place. Now, what is there in the teaching of this parable to arouse rage enough against Jesus to cause any officials to try to kill him? It may be said that this was different from the religious teaching of the time—and, indeed, it was—but was it enough different to cause enemies persistently to hunt Jesus down? Was there anything in the utterances about the seed cast on the ground, about the different types of the lost, about the nature of the Kingdom itself, to arouse murderous intent on anybody's part? No; we could take out of the Gospels all the passages absolutely essential to the understanding of his

gospel—I mean all the passages intended as direct teaching—and not have anything in such selection to account for the wrathful opposition which the speech of Jesus aroused.

Surely, then, the trouble must have been with the criticism of Jesus directed against the official leaders. That criticism was caustic we all admit, but was it much worse than that of John the Baptist? "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" This is about as severe as any word of Jesus, yet it did not bring down upon John the wrath of the officials. We are given to understand that the officials were distressed by the degree of popular support which Jesus had won, but they were impressed also by the popular applause which greeted John. Yet they pursued Jesus with a persistency with which they never followed John. Inasmuch as it was the officials who finally compassed the death of Jesus, we would better try to reproduce in our minds as far as we can the official temper toward Jesus.

The officials heard Jesus laying stress on the inner attitude of will as constituting the righteousness or unrighteousness of a deed. The morality of a life consisted, according to Jesus, in doing the will of God out of the right intent. I am not sure that this alone would have driven the chief priests and scribes to violent plots. The doctrine of the inner purpose as constituting

righteousness was not new. It had been declared of old that the Lord looketh at the heart. The heads of the Jewish religion identified the will of God with the acts which they themselves enjoined upon the people, and would no doubt willingly have subscribed to the demand that these acts be done with sincere inner spirit. The rub came when Jesus began to interpret the acts which the authorities enjoined by conformity with human values. As radical a judgment as any that Jesus proclaimed was that which declared the Sabbath an instrument for the good of man and not man as a creature to be fitted to the demands of the Sabbath. This was enough. The scribes had a vested interest in the Sabbath. They had built up scores of requirements which had to be learned in order to be kept. For them the Sabbath was not only a feature of the established order, but of the divine order as well. By neat turns they had extended the sacredness of the Sabbath to all the regulations which they had made to protect the Sabbath. It was Jesus speaking in human terms as contrasted with institutional that set the officials against him from the outset. If Jesus had confined himself to talking about God, it is possible that he might not have come under severe condemnation at all. Here we see a difference between Jesus and John the Baptist. John said little specific about duties to men. God was to appear through

a chosen Messiah and that Messiah would thoroughly purge his threshing-floor, separating the chaff from the wheat. The emphasis was on what God would do. Now, we cannot believe that in the mind of John the wrath of God was to be directed only to those who had violated ceremonial requirements. John, as Jesus said, was among the greatest of the prophets, and as a prophet knew the significance for the divine of wrongs done the human. Still, there was a difference. John's mind was so centered on the new day about to be brought in by divine power that he did not fully comprehend the meaning of the works of human relief that Jesus wrought. Even when these were worked with every sign of divine power John had difficulty, at least before Jesus gave him definite warning, in understanding how even these marvels showed that Jesus was the Messiah. It was a difference of emphasis.

Moreover, John lived in the desert and appeared only occasionally among men. It may well be that he appeared now and again upon the streets of Jerusalem, but he evidently did not make his profoundest impressions there. John was what he called himself, a voice, but Jesus was a full soul speaking of life values. He was upon the streets and in the Temple precincts. His messages came not chiefly from a pulpit or a platform, but in conversations with indi-

viduals and groups. He made his truth fact which men might talk about as about other facts. It is facts that sooner or later count, and Jesus from the beginning made his truth fact with which men must reckon.

Let us look for a moment at the condition which confronted Jesus. He lived the life of his day face-to-face with the facts of his day. He desired that his teaching about the religious life should become effective in the experiences of the people whom he met day after day. The question with him was as to whether the accepted religion of the time was helping people on to the largest and fullest life. Now, religion was centralized at Jerusalem. The centralizing movement had begun away back in Israel's history before the days of the exile, and the centralization was accepted without considerable question after the return from the exile. Officially speaking, Jerusalem, in the days of Jesus, set the stamp upon all Israel. If official religion was deficient, the deficiency would be felt throughout all the borders of Israel. Jesus saw that what religion was suffering from was officialism. To refer again to the priest and Levite of the parable, the fault was not that the priest and Levite were personally bad men, but that they put something else, or anything else, in the first place before human needs. Their focus had become twisted. Moreover, the officials had become

lovers of money. They had made a working adjustment with the Roman authorities, all the more effective because it probably did not represent any actual agreement, by which they were left supreme in the religious sphere. The exile had done away with the Jewish state church, but it had left the Jewish Church nevertheless. Any secular power knows that the best way to get along with a church is to leave it supreme in its own sphere. The Jewish Church officials were for the most part careful not to have clashes with the Roman authorities, and those authorities were themselves certainly not looking for trouble. The Temple authorities, center of the organized religious life of Israel, were thus in a position to live entirely secular lives, if they avoided trouble. It would not be true to the actual situation to read back into those days modern capitalistic notions. The moneyed men of those times had no glimpses of the distinctive peculiarities of modern capitalism as a system. Nevertheless, there was a fellow-feeling among all holders of position, and all possessors of wealth, marvelously akin to such feelings to-day which arise in the hearts of holders of power when their control is threatened. The Temple authorities and the Roman authorities were alike in not desiring popular uproar. Pontius Pilate, for example, was a cold-blooded tyrant, in spite of his questionings about the nature of

truth and his hesitation in putting an innocent man to death. He had mixed the blood of worshipers with their sacrifices. Still, Pilate did not desire popular uproar. Riots had to be reported to his superior authorities. Both from Temple authorities and from Roman authorities proceeded forces which would make for repression of riot in the streets of Jerusalem.

Now, this sensitiveness to uproar itself gave revolutionists their chance. Though they might be killed in the first clashes of an outbreak, if they got past the peril of those first clashes they might compel the holders of position to considerable change through concession. It was probably such forced change that the Temple authorities feared.

What direction could such a change have taken in the day of Jesus? Purification, first of all. Jesus said that, whereas the Lord had intended his house to be a house of prayer, the priests had made it a den of thieves. Clearly, then, the requisite transformation would be to make the house of the Lord again into a house of prayer. It is not inconceivable that if the show of righteous zeal by the people could be made strong enough, the priests themselves would grant the need of reform. Or if the authorities could catch any glimpse of the moral character and purpose of Jesus, they might yield to his demand for the spiritual transformation

of the Temple activities. Or, still further, and most likely, if the aroused conscience of the people pressed hard enough, there might be a change in the priesthood. There is nothing to indicate that Jesus contemplated any revolutionary overturn of the institutions of Jewish religion. He did not pay much attention to institutions as such. All were dangerous in his sight, and all could be used for spiritual purposes. If we are to use the term "revolution" at all, we should have to confine the application to a Temple revolution, where an irresistible demand meant not the destruction of the Temple, or the overthrow of the Jewish Church, but the change in the character of leadership. In all this Jesus stood in the direct line of Old Testament prophecy.

We must thus tread a path away from that of those who tell us that Jesus was chiefly a teacher of truth, misunderstood by his time. He was, some would have us believe, a proclaimer of principles that had no reference to immediate social and political policies, except as these truths might win an individual leader here and there from a mistaken course. Those who insist that the church of Christ must keep clear from social adventures never tire of quoting the example of Jesus. The favorite reference is to the silence of Jesus about slavery. We are told that Jesus did not attack slavery directly, but that

he announced the principles that would one day drive slavery from the earth. Those who talk thus seem to forget that when slavery was driven from the earth it yielded before the onslaughts of living men, actual historical characters many of whom definitely fought against slavery in the name of Christ. All that we can grant to this remark about uttering principles that in the end cause evils to disappear is that evils disappear when an age is ripe for attack upon them one at a time. A world-wide onslaught upon slavery would have been futile in the day of Jesus. To say now that Jesus was misunderstood in that he was a proclaimer of principles without any intention of applying them to his own time leaves Jesus in a doubtful position. Why did he not make himself clear at this point? Can we believe that Jesus would have allowed men to persist in a misunderstanding of himself if he could by a word have removed the misunderstanding? Can we believe that he would not have gone to all possible lengths to make men see his real purpose? Jesus saw as no other could have done the impossibility of making men seize moral ideas before the men possessed some power of moral seizure, and he therefore kept silence at times when speech would have been utterly vain. Jesus, however, could have made it evident that he meant no application of his truth to existing institutions if he intended no such

application. He was not a revolutionist in that he sought to drive out Rome, or to introduce at once reforms not to be dreamed of for centuries after his time, or to overthrow the Temple organization. Still, the record can bear only one interpretation,—the attitude and activity of Jesus toward the Temple authorities could only have meant that he intended his preaching to make a difference then and there in the one outstanding social institution in the Judaism of his time. The authorities cried out that Jesus was attempting to overthrow the Temple, and that he was trying to arouse rebellion against Rome. Let us remind ourselves that these charges were exactly of the same stamp as those urged against prophetic utterance to-day. It is an old stratagem, at least as old as Jezebel, to seek to make out that any criticism of social institutions directed against the human distress they cause is attack upon religion and treason to the state. What gives this charge its power is that it is so easily urged, so readily believed, and so hard to answer. Jesus did not repudiate the accusation that he was a social disturber. He did not seek to be a king in the ordinary meaning of the title, the meaning that his enemies declared, but he knew that following him at all would make a difference in actual relations to the one institution which the Jews considered central. That institution was not only religiously, but politi-

cally and socially and financially central. It is astonishing how careful Jesus was in what he said about the priests. The accustomed prophetic denunciation would have called upon the people to cast the priests out. Elijah would probably have advocated physical violence, but Jesus never did. Hosea would likely have counseled the people to have nothing to do with corrupt officials. Jesus was more cautious even than that. He advised respect to the priests just because they sat in Moses' seat. The people were to follow their commandments, but not their example. Still, the speeches of Jesus, considering not only what they were in themselves, but to whom they were spoken, and where, were indubitably troublesome.

I have said that Jesus was not waging war against capitalism as such, and that for the sufficient reason that there was no organized capitalism as we know it. I do not withdraw what I have said on this point, but my earlier remark needs qualification. I mean by capitalism the organized system of to-day which has world-wide ramifications of an impersonal order, which constitutes society itself the chief offender in manifold injustices by making possible collective activities which merely individualistic protests cannot remedy, all of which creates a moral problem by itself. Nevertheless, the driv-

ing force of capitalism has been at work in all ages—the desire of individual men to get all this world's goods they can, whether working singly, or together, or in any fashion whatever which will "bring results." Controlling religious authorities in the day of Jesus were lovers of money—we know this on scriptural authority. The business of the Temple money-changers, and of those who bought and sold doves, must have been considerable, judged by the standards of Jerusalem. Who can believe that the dealers did not have understandings with the ecclesiastical officials? The officials seem to have been enraged by the attack of Jesus on the money-changers. Suppose every penny of the money received by the Temple authorities from the money-changers went to legitimate uses of the Temple itself. The money which the changers kept for themselves did not go to religious uses. They spent their gains for their own pleasures or for more gains. Now, these dealers were, in the judgment of Jesus, "thieves." They had taken virtually by force what did not belong to them. The Temple therefore was in alliance with thieves and was profiting by thievery. To at least a degree the Temple was in alliance with all the other thieveries of the thieves.

I do not believe this word "thief" was just a spontaneous ejaculation of wrath without regard to its precise fitness in this immediate context.

The term exactly fits. The Temple traders were exacting, not a fair return for a legitimate service, but a price which could be described only as robbery, and taking it because they held the pilgrims from distant lands in their power. Robbery has always been at bottom the taking of what does not belong to one by the sheer power to take it. Now, Jesus used words for what they meant to him. He was not primarily set upon introducing a new economic order with the aim of getting more of the world's goods into the hands of those to whom they more rightfully belonged. It is folly, though, to say that he did not care for the outrage of men's taking from other men what justly belonged to those other men. The use of the word "thieves" shows what he thought of all such dealers. Any man who was living off goods that did not belong to him aligned himself in spirit at least against Jesus when he heard the word "thieves."

The reason why prophecy so quickly arouses deadly resentment is its keen scent for the evil in the acquisition of material goods. It is not too much to say that every one of the prophets came upon the dangers of material gain before he had gone more than a step or two in his prophetic career. If we drop out of the teaching of Jesus all he had to say about the perils of wealth, there would not be much of his moral teaching left, and what was left would lack much

that gives it point. There is no reason why buying and selling should not be as holy in the sight of the Lord as sowing and reaping, but the presence of gain-seekers in the Temple precincts was an incongruity to Jesus. He knew that it meant more than at first appeared—the consent and the connivance of the priests, with the love of money which that involved. Moreover, the utter indifference which Jesus himself showed toward money could not but rebuke the priests. The instant a prophet touches a financial interest he has passed definitely out of the realm of the abstract. He becomes altogether intelligible. So Jesus was not aiming at social revolution, but he was disturbing every maker of money in Jerusalem who was profiting by his fellow man's weakness. That was enough to make him dangerous. His attention was directly focused on the Temple, but he saw more than that. The light which he himself threw on the priests was irritating to many besides priests. Every lover of money was annoyed by him.

Jesus did not succeed in his attempt to make better the Temple conditions, but what prophet ever does win victory in his immediate aim? The most successful prophets of old were Elijah and Elisha, and they won by force, Elisha's effectiveness seeming especially to call for apology by later prophets. Jesus would not use force except to drive out the money-changers.

Probably he could not have defeated the Temple interests without armed support at his back, and that he would not accept. Here, by the way, we discover a reason why John the Baptist fell to wondering whether Jesus was truly the promised Messianic Leader or not. John believed in purging the floor. He would get rid of the chaff. While we are on this theme we may as well look at the contrast between John and Jesus as prophets. The record tells us that Jesus respected John as the equal of any of the prophets. It is puzzling to see why Jesus said this if we look at John's detailed program alone. John does not seem to have announced much of a program. He did reply to those who asked of him what they should do, that they should keep free from all acts of oppression. The publicans were to exact no more than was allotted to them. The soldiers were to be content with their wages, which seems insignificant as marking the coming of a new Kingdom. Perhaps John was thinking of the peril of having a discontented soldiery quartered on the people, perhaps he was concerned with other wrongdoers, chiefly, than the plain people who flocked to him. Perhaps he regarded the new order so imminent that men might better not attempt any radical changes until after the new day had dawned. Still, Jesus looked on John as a great prophet, for John had that awareness of the imminency of God which

makes the prophet mighty. Moreover, John saw the evils of his time as moral and not merely as ceremonial. Some wrongs had to be cut away. If we were to speak in modern terms, we should say that John did not believe in reform expediences. There had to be an entirely new order, with no half-measures. To carry out his own figure of speech the good must be threshed out from the chaff, and the good-for-nothing burned. Pending that revolution the soldiers might well be advised to be content with their pay and to refrain from disorder.

It is easy to see that John could have misunderstood the program of Jesus. He had an eye for mass, for quantitative rather than qualitative values. When he learned that Jesus was curing the sick and restoring the crippled, he raised questions not because he did not recognize the good of such acts of mercy. He did not see how this was to transform a nation. It must have seemed to him that the man who, he hoped, was to stir a mighty breeze with the saving of a vast fan was stooping to pick out the grains of wheat from the chaff one by one. John desired wholesaleness, and he desired it then and there. He craved action of the decisive, crisis-compelling stamp.

Now, Jesus honored John as a prophet, honored him for his feeling of outrage at the religious condition of the people, for his realization

that the transformation must be thoroughgoing, for his outspokenness in criticism even of the claimant to Messiahship, for his awareness that the Lord of Israel was at hand. The fault of John was that he was not radical enough. Even in his own day, as I have already said, he was not as crisis-compelling as Jesus. The officials were, no doubt, well enough pleased when John was out of the way, but they did not go to large trouble to form conspiracies against him. They did not send out spies to catch him in his talk. They did not create an alliance with their own deadly enemies like the Herodians, an alliance founded on a commonly shared deadly hatred.

If John could have peered ahead for a few years after his own death, he would probably have felt that his misgivings had been well-founded, that is, if he had not looked far enough ahead. For on a short-range view events worked out as John feared probable. There was no fire started, no winnowing such as John longed for. For a generation after the death of Jesus there was nothing that would have adequately satisfied the expectations of John. We cannot believe that he would have been content with no other outcome of his own teaching than that publicans keep within limits, soldiers become orderly, and those with extra coats and meat share them with their less fortunate brothers. The meagerness of this program itself is an indication that

John looked for catastrophic transformations. He had prepared a highway, but could not see that anything was approaching over it.

No, the trouble was that John was not radical enough. Axes and fire do not get down to the roots. I am not sure but that if Jesus had been willing to work more according to John's plan, he could have accomplished about what John desired. Suppose he had been willing to allow the shouting multitudes to make a demonstration against the Temple authorities in his behalf. The authorities were afraid of the people. We know that by the direct statement of the Gospels. We cannot conclude that when Jesus himself drove out the money-changers they were afraid of his physical force. Physically speaking they could have hustled Jesus out of the Temple with short shrift. They were afraid of the people. When the authorities took the final steps against Jesus, they had to do so after dark and get their work done, or at least well begun, before there could be effective resistance. Jesus might quickly have cleansed the Temple of the priests themselves if he had been willing to countenance even a slight show of force.

Looking back to-day, we can see that if Jesus had thus succeeded, he would have met the most complete failure. No matter what may be pardonable in the followers of Jesus, we know that it would not have been permissible for Jesus

himself to seek to exalt his ideas by force. Jesus' willingness to go to the cross for his doctrine set the seal upon the teaching as nothing else could; but if we look just at the teaching itself, we may well believe that the willingness thus to die exalted chiefly the divine method in bringing in the kingdom of God. If the death of Jesus were nothing but a prophetic protest against force, it would be of unfathomable value. We all accept the content of the divine message. We see in the cross of Christ the dynamic which has sent that message down across the ages. We have not clearly enough beheld in the cross the method of revealing truth, the utter abandonment of all instruments of physical force whatsoever. That abandonment allowed the enemies of Jesus to have the whole field to themselves so far as force was concerned. They went their limit, and showed the strength and weakness of physical force once and for all. If the cross of Christ made no other revelation than this, we could not exhaust its worth.

The prophetic spirit of Jesus showed itself in his attitude toward the Temple interests, but Jesus was more than a prophet—Prophet, Priest, and King the church has delighted to call him from the beginning, designations which for convenience we may use as well as any. It is not possible to draw the line between one phase of the activity of Jesus and another, but perhaps

we can profitably reflect upon the significance for the priestly functions of Jesus of the prophetic, that is to say, of the emphasis on moral doing as the center of religious experience. Obviously, Jesus was Jesus: the mysterious depths of his personality have never yet been plumbed by human understanding. Nevertheless, we can understand some phases of that personality even if we cannot fathom their mystery. The priesthood of Jesus consisted essentially in his being a way of approach to God. He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. One of the many marvels in the life of Jesus is the extent to which the prophetic element was balanced with the priestly and the kingly. Ordinarily, the prophet is not deeply interested in individuals, for example, except as he sees in them embodiments of a cause. Now, Jesus kept always his interest in individuals. He was always the door by which the individual could find his way to God, entrance through the door being moral obedience like that of Jesus.

The full-orbed insight of Jesus into divine truth came out of steady and unceasing doing of the will of God, though that puts a mystery in the unceasing steadiness of the doing. Still, once we have granted the doing, some results follow as of course. There is a steadiness in the religious experience of Jesus. We have all felt that, in reading the life of our Lord, the con-

sciousness of God as Father is not interrupted in him, or subject to quite the same ebb and flow as that of others. There are, indeed, moments of extraordinary uplift, but they do not seem to start from as far down in the depths as do those of others. Always too the element of prophetic activity runs through the mystic experience.

It is strange that Jesus says so little about religious experiences as experiences. We never hear him speak as if an experience were unutterable in itself. It always seems to be something that comes out of moral doing and leads on to moral power. Any of the experiences recorded in the Gospels have this mark of moral quality upon them. The students of the life of Jesus always turn to the baptism of Jesus by John as an outstanding inner crisis. The vision of the dove and the sound of the voice would seem to have marked a lofty height in the consciousness of Jesus. We do not by any means have to accept the claim that it was through this experience that Jesus first became conscious of his Sonship, to recognize that the vision and the voice were profoundly significant for Jesus. Now, it is to be noted that the vision which came followed a deliberate acceptance by Jesus of the baptism of John—of John, whom he himself called a mighty prophet. It is noteworthy that the vision of God vouchsafed here to Jesus came,

as far as we can see, not with the deliberate attempt to seek God directly, but out of the attempt to get close to men. The baptism at the hands of John in company with the multitude of others meant that Jesus was definitely choosing to identify himself with men. This may not be a declaration of the supremacy of the human values in quite the same fashion as that of an Amos denouncing social injustice, but it was an exaltation of the human values nevertheless. There is always content in the experiences of Jesus. They declare something. This vision at baptism declares that in identifying himself with men Jesus had revealed his kinship with God.

I do not think we go far astray in thinking of the temptation narrative also as revealing an essentially mystic crisis. We concede that it is permissible for us to say that we have here the result of the reflections of Jesus cast into picturesque form. If such form, however, was effective it must have appealed to the feeling for and expectation of visions. We find nothing out of the way in thinking of the temptation itself as experience of exalted uplift rather than as the pictorial putting of a series of conclusions reached merely by reflection. Here, again, the content is moral. Jesus is facing a moral crisis and the question is one of duty. The accepted interpretation is that Jesus had to determine

whether he would minister chiefly to the physical needs of men, and whether he would rely upon miraculous power to convince the multitudes of his Messiahship, and whether finally he would resort to moral compromise. There is much in the story of the temptation beyond such summary statement, but the three outstanding essentials of the experience have to do with moral issues. Now, if it is permissible to think of the narrative based on such experience as revealing a mystic vision, it is easy to see how such a vision itself might have been so regarded as to lose all moral value. While no one but a mind of deepest moral purpose could have received such a vision, those to whom the experience was related might have missed its meaning. Stones like loaves of bread, the gaze downward from the pinnacle of the Temple, the vision of the kingdom of the world from the mountaintop—all this is just the visional setting likely to attract attention to itself. Yet in the scriptural story the moral meanings stand out unmistakably. The vision was of the truly prophetic type—it came out of search for light on spiritual duty, it was spiritual in its own content, it was a re-enforcement for spiritual tasks ahead.

Another experience which clearly belongs in the mystic order is that of the transfiguration. We are not directly told the meaning of this vision for Jesus himself, but we are told its sig-

nificance for the disciples. It gave the disciples a new grasp on the importance and nature of Jesus and something of a hint of the purpose of the suffering just ahead. Here, again, we have to do not with ineffable experience which cannot be described. There is definite description, and the words uttered in the experience are recalled. The disciples knew the prophetic nature of Moses and Elijah—both heroes of scriptural prophecy.

Now, the remarkable feature about the gospel experiences is that they are not remarkable by the accepted standards of mysticism. That is to say, there is not about them the quality which seems to count so much in the more typically mystic visions. The feeling of the ineffable, the altogether unutterable, is lacking. No doubt if we could ourselves, with the Christ, have shared such a vision as that on the Mount of Transfiguration, with our present-day understanding as to who Jesus was, we should have been overcome with inexpressible emotion. Still, the central value lay not in any transport of ecstatic contemplation, but in the moral re-enforcement. In the moments on the Mount there was indeed enough of what Otto calls the "numinous"—the dread-causing—which he deems the heart of the religious experience. The narrative gives us to understand that Peter was so overcome that he asked a foolish question as to the possibility of building tabernacles there for Moses and Elijah

and Jesus. The chronicler of the incident informs us that this was an irresponsible ejaculation on Peter's part, because he did not know what to say, being "sore afraid." I mention this for the reason that if we accept at their full claim for themselves some of the present-day expositions of mysticism as the essence of religion, we shall have to place the emphasis in our reflection about the Mount of Transfiguration upon Peter's dread—caused by the "numinous" —out of which came only a stupid utterance, and we shall have to put the revelation as to the approach of the cross off to one side.

For the most part the revelation of or emphasis upon some profound moral truth stands at the center of the experiences of Jesus, of those which he had himself and of those which he caused in others. If we are searching for awed contemplation of the revelation through Jesus, we can find it in the moral content of what he did and was. We use again the oft-quoted sentence of Kant that he stood in awe before the starry heaven above and the moral law within. We have something of this same feeling in looking upon Jesus. The stars themselves, just what we see of them with the physical eye, do not move us to transports of ecstatic vision. It is what we know about them that gives us an awe-causing revelation. So with the moral revelation in Jesus. The moral duties which we may have

time and again taken as matters of course are seen in his thought to be the indispensable paths to the Divine Presence.

Jesus has been called King throughout the history of the church. Here again the emphasis is on the moral outcome—stated in human terms. Emerson wrote, "God said, I am tired of kings." We all know what the poet meant when he wrote thus, but we know too that no human progress is likely to do away with kings. It will merely change their titles. "King" is the title for a type of ruler in a political society, but there are other rulers besides political. Any man who exerts such sway over his fellows as to make them his followers is a king to the extent of that sway, no matter by what title we call him.

It would not be possible here to indicate all the prophetic activity of Jesus in making his control a moral leadership, but one or two things should be noticed. Think for a moment of freedom as a demand of genuinely religious activity. Jesus sought to make influence take the place of authority in the kingdom of God. That kingdom must be a kingdom of free citizens. Now, we are all aware that in actual human existence freedom is limited. We are bound to certain courses by fundamental necessities, but even in relation to these necessities there can be a free spirit and a servile spirit. Take those periodic lapses of so-called civilization into heathenism

of which I have again and again spoken. They almost always occur in the name of freedom, and professedly seek for what is called larger human life. Let us not forget that Jesus lived surrounded by heathenism, the spirit and deeds of the Gentiles. He did not break out upon heathenism with the fury with which he attacked the institutions of his own people, possibly because he did not take heathenism as seriously as he did a self-centered Judaism. Yet he spoke of the Gentiles as peculiarly seekers after food and raiment and power over one another. Wealth itself he came near treating with contempt, or at least with indifference. He accepted the hospitality of the rich, but never in such wise as to suggest that he was impressed with their wealth. On the other hand he was not an ascetic. It would require heavy strain on our imagination to picture him as clothing himself as did John the Baptist. In a word, Jesus was free in his attitude toward the things of this world, and desired his followers likewise to be free. He would have men live in such satisfactory relations to the material world as not to have to think about matter. If a man has too much goods, he thinks too much about them. If he has too little, he likewise thinks too much. The striking statement about caring not for the things of the morrow is a protest against both too much and too little.

The prophets before Jesus had a sound instinct back of some of their protests against what was manifestly advancing civilization. For example, the Rechabites of about the time of Jehu raged against vineyards. The advocates of temperance to-day tell us that this meant an attack upon wine-drinking. The attack on wine-drinking was incidental to a protest against the vineyard, or anything cultivated. The crude, simple life of the desert was better to the Rechabites than anything pointing toward what we should call civilization. Now, the Rechabites were right in their protest, for the contact with the civilization of the time, especially that of Tyre, was debasing. While Ezekiel wrote many years later than this, he drew a picture of Tyre that must have been accurate for many centuries previous—the glories of a highly organized commercial city. Anything like such civilization the Rechabites looked upon as deadly peril.

There does not seem to be any trace of the Rechabite in Jesus. He did not call upon his followers to give up the city for the desert, but he did teach them to be free from slavery to material things. If we could have a state of society in which men would be free enough from the necessity of having to think about the physical to give the higher values a chance, we should have the ideal. It is said that the man is best-dressed whose clothes attract no attention

to themselves. If a man is so poorly clad that people cannot help looking at him, he is badly dressed. If his clothes are so elaborate that people cannot help noticing the clothes as clothes, he is badly dressed. As to material in an ideal state, the material would not attract attention to itself. In such an ideal state—where the will of God would be done on earth as it is in heaven—we may well believe that the physical processes would be as useful to the high purposes of society as are the bodily processes of a healthy human organism, which minister to the needs of feeling and thinking and doing without calling attention to themselves. It is the disordered processes—those too little fed or too much fed—that in both individual and social organisms are always attracting notice to themselves. Jesus as King is to be thought of as the center of a moral society which has so heeded the prophetic warnings about the dangers of too little or of too much wealth that the material processes will seem to move along of themselves.

In another direction the idea of Jesus as to freedom went beyond the ordinary prophetic conceptions. The prophets had always the note of compulsion in their messages. It would be altogether folly to blame them for this. They lived in times when compulsion was taken as natural and inevitable. The prophets called on the people to rise and cast out wrongdoers. I

have already discussed the incongruity between the prophetic method of some of the sterner prophets and that of Jesus as concerns physical might, and I shall not traverse that ground again. Nevertheless, it is in order to mention a phase of compulsion which we should never think of calling physical force, and which is very attractive in itself. I refer to the rush of a dominating, overwhelming personality which seems of itself to carry everything before it. Elisha called out to the ascending Elijah: "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." That is virtually what Elijah was. There was an onsweeping power about Elijah which literally carried everything before him. Many of the prophets seem to have been of this order. There was no standing up against them. Yet when such dynamic beings are gone and their voices are still, they seem to leave nothing behind them. I do not intend to disparage dynamic qualities, but I do feel that the power of Jesus was above and beyond this. To begin with, Jesus respected men too much to overpower them by sheer weight of personal will. That is an illuminating word from Jesus: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," but the Word informs us that the door must be opened from the inside. Now, we do not always think of prophets as knocking before entrance. They are more likely to come in without knocking.

The message of Jesus makes its appeal through the note of persuasion. Sometimes we feel that it is possible to separate a prophet's message from the prophet. Many of the prophets, notably the earlier ones, felt thus about it themselves. The message seemed to come almost from outside themselves. They were drafted into a service of prophecy which they could not escape. Divinity seemed to come upon them and take possession of them almost in spite of themselves. Even such a mighty man of God as Jeremiah, between whom and Jesus the followers of Jesus saw some resemblance, felt himself working under this heavy compulsion.

Now, Jesus himself always gives us the impression that he is acting freely, pouring himself into all that he did. Even in the days when he had set his face to go to Jerusalem, and in the dark hours of the struggle in the garden, he lets us see that he is acting freely. The cup is bitter, but he is drinking it of his own accord. About all this there is something morally contagious. I say *morally* contagious, not a contagion forced on us, or a contagion of winsomeness merely. The free surrender of Jesus to the loftiest ideal, or, rather, the co-operation with that ideal, arouses the wills of men to like free response. Jesus is himself in what he says and does. Acceptance of his word is breathing his very purpose and spirit. This power to pour himself

into what he said and did makes it hard for us to discuss Jesus as Prophet without at the same time thinking of him as Priest and King. He was at one and the same time all of these, with no sharp line of division or distinction between the various functions. He had the power to communicate himself. We say of some men that they are themselves greater than anything they say or do. We feel that there is a reserve which never comes into action. I am not at all confident that we can speak thus of Jesus. He got himself all out into utterance, the mystery being not in some strange inexplicable quality, but in the depth of the meaning of the utterance itself. We think we understand the meaning at first glance, but we find deeper and deeper profundities the longer we look. It is all there before our gaze, and yet our gaze cannot include it all.

It is in this direction also that we must look for an appreciation of the quality of beauty in the teaching and deeds and life of Jesus. How seldom do we think of beauty as a mark of the prophetic spirit!—and yet the mood of the artist and that of the prophet are much alike. The artist is grievously disturbed when he sees principles of beauty violated. Literally, he cannot rest. Ugliness makes him physically weary. It may even actually make him ill. We call this "temperament," and it is, indeed, sometimes nothing more than an affectation or a pose.

Nevertheless, even in those who are not themselves artists this distress at the violation of the artistic may take on poignant acuteness. So also with the prophet. He cannot rest in the presence of evil.

Does not this likeness of mood hint at a kinship of spirit? In a thoroughgoing understanding of beauty, beauty and righteousness are close together. Beautiful curves and colors may indeed be employed to set off what is itself unnatural and ugly, but beauty goes deeper than curve or color. It has to do with balance and symmetry, with design. In this solider meaning the genuine prophets are true artists. They have an instinct for proportion and for the congruous.

It will not do for us to be so confused by what passes for beauty. Just now we are hearing a deal about art for art's sake, which may mean art for frivolity's sake, or for cynicism's sake, or for lust's sake. The artist protests to-day against art for morality's sake. If he hears constantly that art is to be used just to set off formal moral teaching of one order or another, he is warranted in the protest. The living moral spirit, however, is quite a different affair and may be, from one angle, just what beauty is from another. The moral spirit and the sensitiveness to beauty may be as closely inseparable as the concave and the convex sides of the same curve. In this fundamental aspect of the moral as

human life, moving into the largest and finest in expression, there is something in the roughest of the prophets—let us say Elijah—suggestive of the beauty of grandeur. Beauty has to do even with digging deep to lay a foundation. Just from a glance at a foundation it ought to be possible to get some hint as to the soundness of the beauty of the builder's plan. Any sincere artistic intelligence to-day, planning a mighty structure, desires the building to appear to be what it is. The genuine artist will not give the highest praise to a structure which looks as if the weight of the roof were carried on ribs of stone, when they are steel covered with stone. He will not pronounce a building genuine—in the artistic sense, I mean—that is so "faced" with stone as to imply that the building is all stone. Now, this forthright honesty, this honesty of actually bearing a weight which foundation or pillar professes to bear, is the honesty of the prophet, and the beauty of the prophet, the honesty and the beauty, too, of the true line. The beauty of the teaching of Jesus—and of the life of Jesus—was of this solidly prophetic kind. There never has been a prophet less of a sentimentalist than Jesus, never one who has cared less for beauty of the superficial ornamental order, never one to whom the beauty of sound design, of moral balance, of the direct line has appealed more powerfully.

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It is needless to say that Jesus built on the foundations laid by the prophets. In spite of all the mechanicalism and legalism of the Jewish religion in his day Jesus had before him in his hearers enough of understanding of devotion to moral doing as the chief duty to God to insure a welcome for his teaching that the only way to master his words is to "do" them. The injunctions that the official religion of the time prescribed for "doing" were often futile, but that officialism knew that the religion of the prophets was one of morality, though the officials had put a limited and often perverted content into morality. For this widespread common understanding the prophets were chiefly responsible. To those prophets Jesus was indebted for a measureably cultivated field on which to cast his seed. The prophetic mind is usually of the plowshare type, and the plowshares had been at work for centuries before Jesus. Jesus came in the fullness of time, the Book tells us. He came to a field which had been plowed and replowed.

Jesus, however, went beyond the prophets. He was more than a prophet and had therefore power that the prophets did not have. It is almost impossible for one who is strictly a prophet to preach the love of God. He may be himself filled with the realization of God's love, but it is hard for him to talk of love at the top of his voice. Righteousness can be shouted forth, but

not love, at least in its more delicate and subtler shades. Jesus somehow held together the truths of righteousness and love in such wise as to make righteousness kindly and compassionate and the love solidly established on the moral will. If it had not been for this emphasis on the moral will, to which we so persistently return, Christianity would probably not have lasted as a distinctive religion for three centuries. Christianity is a religion of redemption, of redemption out of moral indifference or transgression to richness and fullness of moral life as found in Jesus. There were other religions of redemption when Christianity was born, religions promising redemption even to immortal life, religions of the dying and rising God, so-called. I do not believe that these much-discussed mystery cults had as much influence on Paul's theology as is often declared, but I do think they confronted Christianity as serious and attractive rivals. If the ethical element had been left out of Christianity, or had been put in a subordinate place, Christianity would have been swallowed up in the mystery religions. For those religions taught that their followers could by identifying themselves with the god of the mystery die to one life and rise to another. There was this much of resemblance to Christianity. But how vast the difference! In the mystery cult there was little trace of prophetic fire whatever, little exaltation

of the moral quality of life as supremely significant. It is that will to do the will of the moral God which marks Christianity as the religion of Jesus and the prophets. The mystery cults have long since passed, but other rivals of Christianity are constantly presenting themselves. The foes which the followers of Jesus have most to fear to-day are those which hold to the forms of Christianity while minimizing or disregarding its prophetic content and spirit.

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